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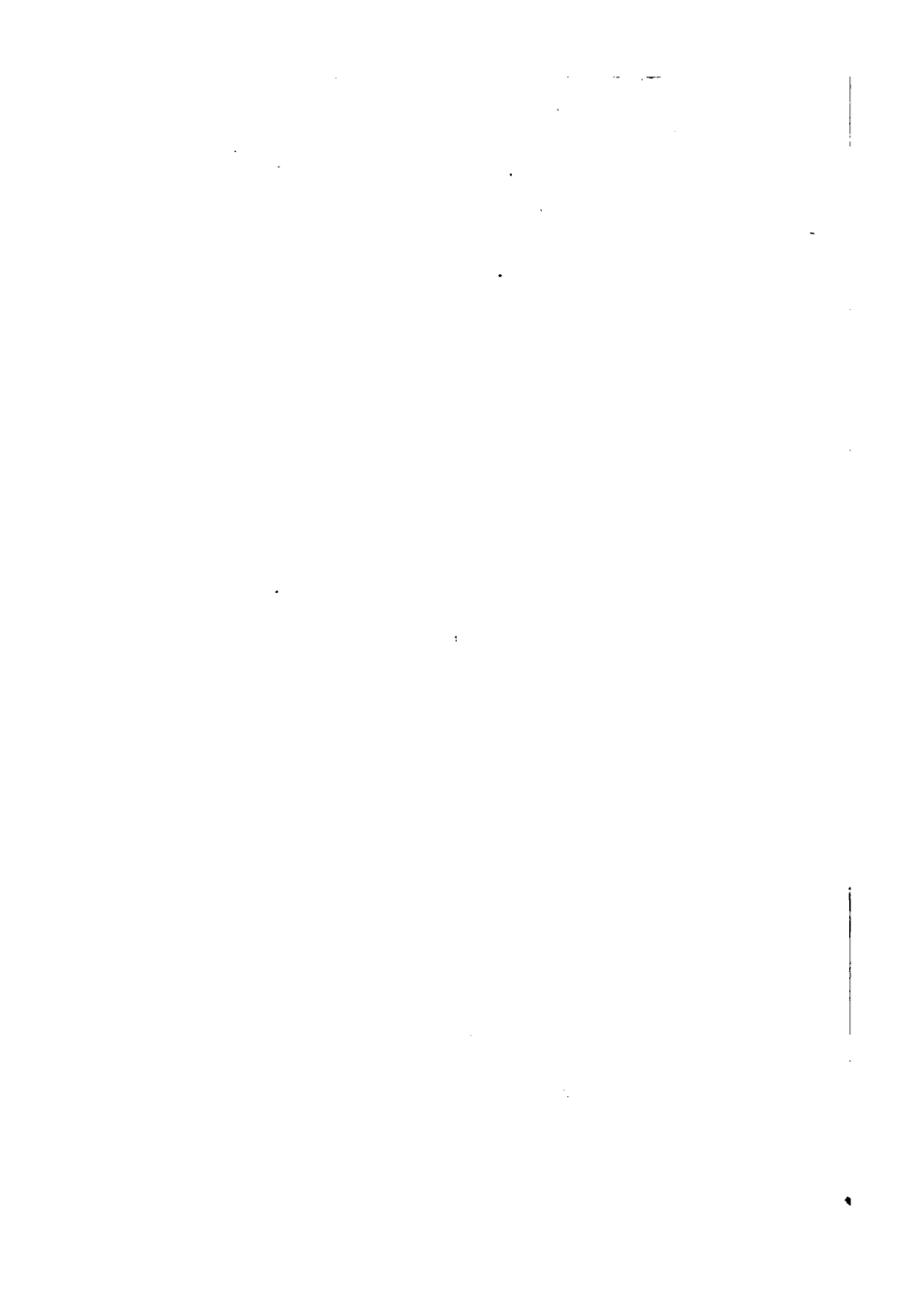
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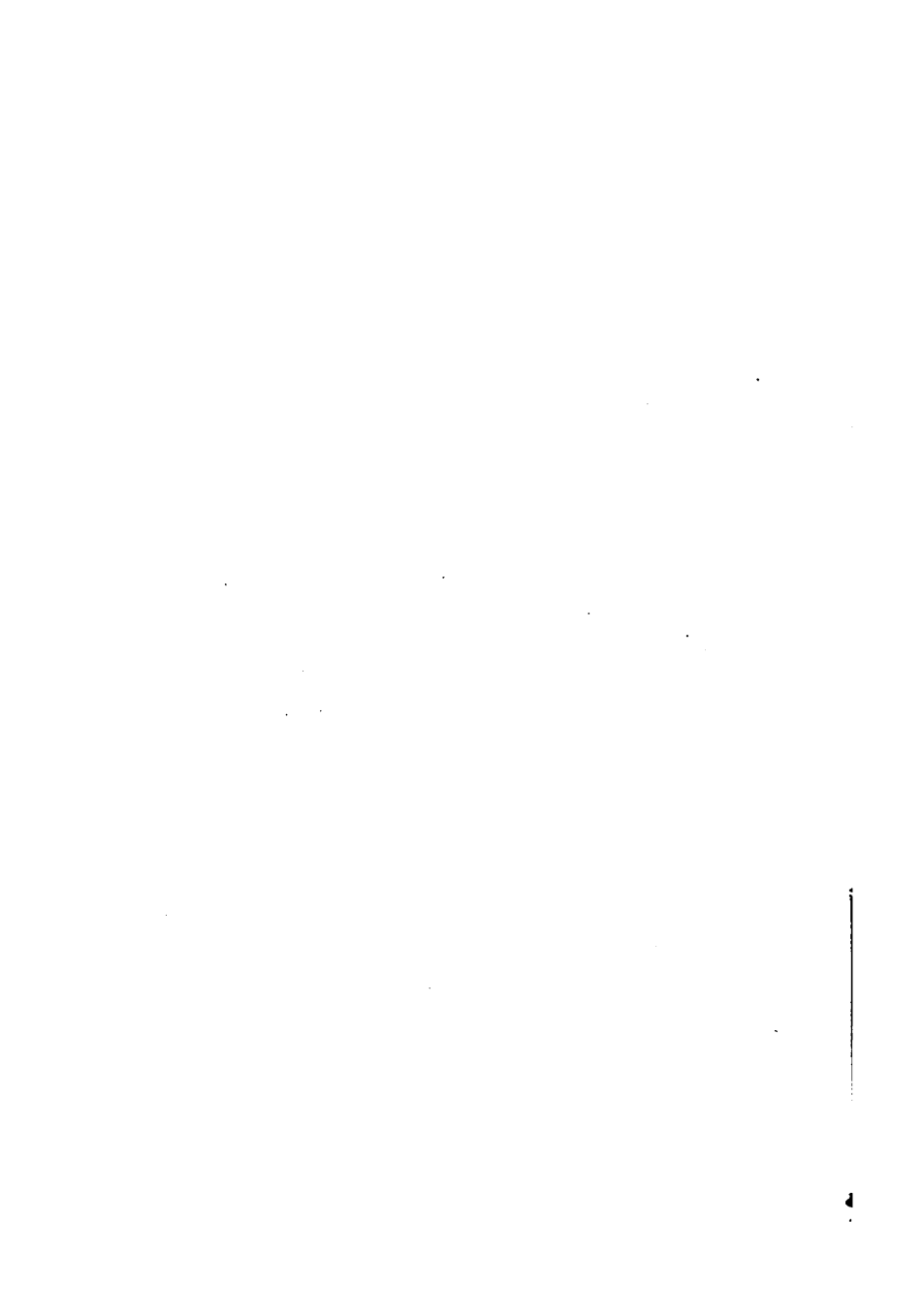




THE POET'S DREAM:

A

TALE OF CHRISTMAS.







THE
POET'S

DREAM



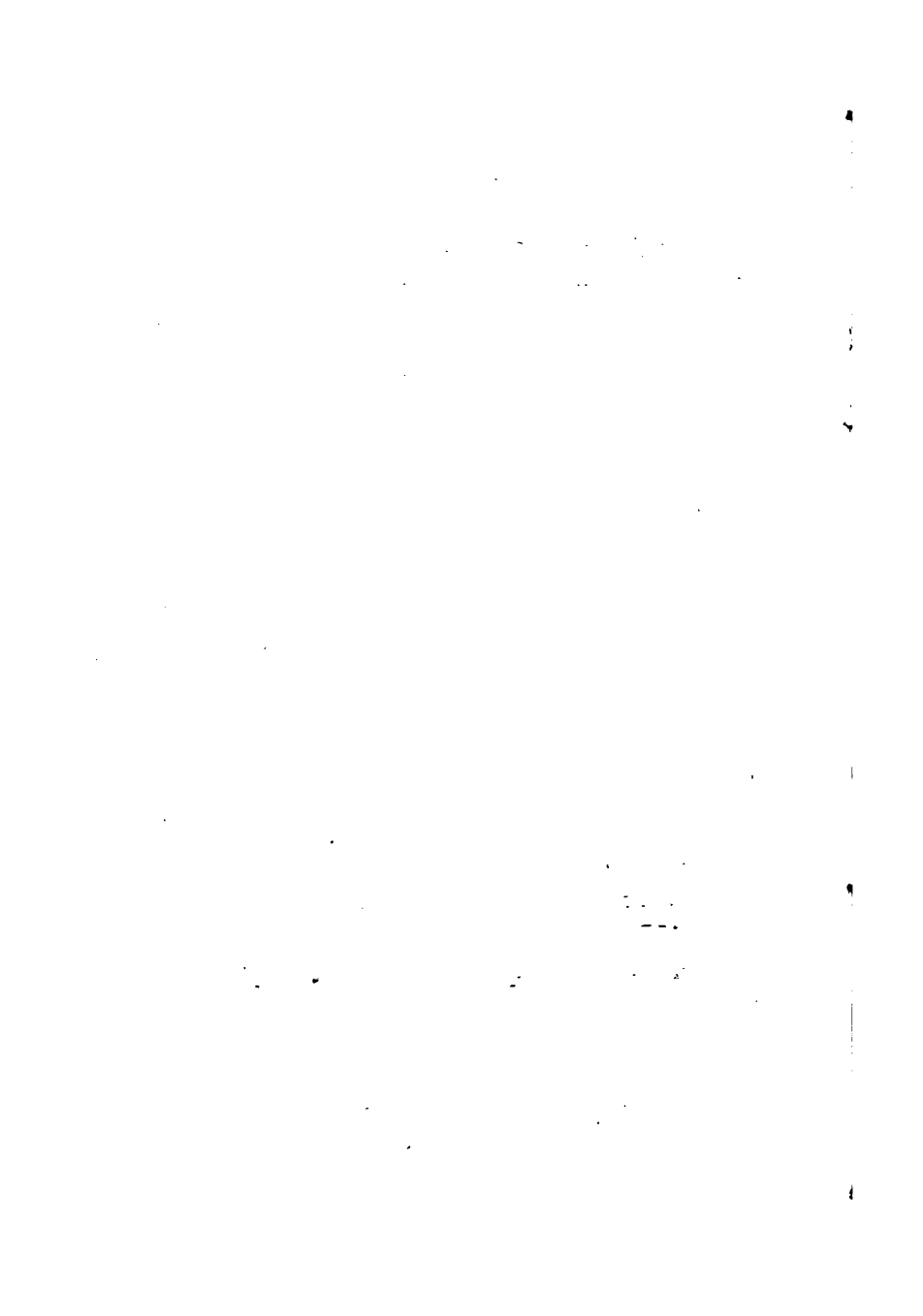
A TALE OF CHRISTMAS



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TALE OF CHRISTMAS.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY S. MAYSON.

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TO
CHARLES SWAIN, ESQ.,
THIS LITTLE WORK,
DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE THE SUFFERINGS AND VICISSITUDES
OF AUTHORS,
IS, WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS GENIUS,
AND
OF ESTEEM FOR HIS CHARACTER,
MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E .



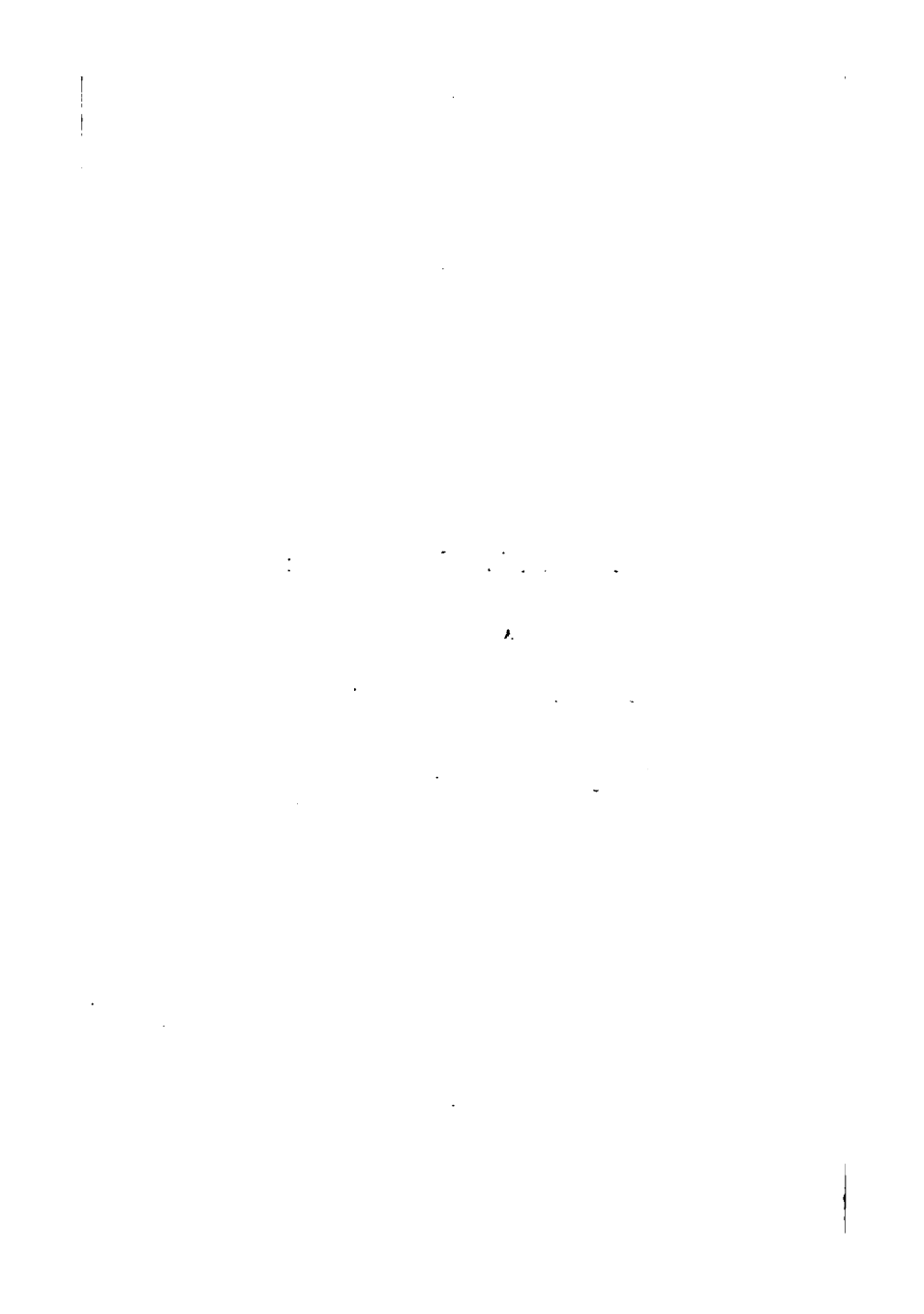
WHEN this Book was written it was done in humble imitation of that very beautiful and talented little volume which was the pioneer to this class of literature. It was at first composed to be read at a meeting of a small, but really valuable, literary society, of which the Author was a member, and consequently then had more the character of an Essay ; but as the subject developed itself into one every way calculated to set forth, in the most graphic and powerful manner, the trials and sufferings which men of genius have often to undergo, it was attempted to give to it more the character of a story, that it might

appeal the more strongly on behalf of those for whom it was written, and encourage a better thought in men's minds, that they may sometimes think, when perusing the works of an author, and a poet especially, of the labour which he has expended for their delight; and, above all things, to remember the great honour which is due to one who can lift up their hearts above the sordid cares of humanity, and make them join in all that is noble and beautiful, to the elevation of themselves and the principles which make them great.

THE POET'S DREAM:

A

TALE OF CHRISTMAS.





IT WAS
CHRISTMAS
—crisp,
frosty,
genuine
hearty
CHRISTMAS—



one of
the
olden
time,
that
opened
the

hearts and pockets of men and taught them to be generous. The city bells rang merrily, speaking joy

to every one, and nothing was heard but greetings and welcomes : for wherever you went, it was CHRISTMAS, merry CHRISTMAS—a blessing on it ! The rich rejoiced, for it told of his approaching carnival of fêtes and festivals. The middle class hailed it with enthusiasm, for it united his family at the social hearth, and made his heart beat thick with gladness. The poor rejoiced, for he too—though he had no happy reunion nor glittering festival in store—looked upon it with happiness and a joy anticipated—he scarce knew why :—it might be, because his betters set him the example, or it might be for customs' sake—it mattered not to him ; he loved Christmas—loved it for itself. And blessed is that people, who, forgetting the sufferings and oppressions of the past, the kicks and the buffetings of a contentious world, the spurns, the insolences, and the wrongs of life, can set apart one little space for joy, and mindless of past want or future care, dares to smile with hopeful heart and bid itself be happy.—Yes, Happiness gleamed everywhere. It was in the city and in the town—in the broad square and in the narrow alley—in the noble mansion and in the humble cellar,—for who dared to desecrate that holy time with thoughts foreign to its

nature? They were henceforth excepted people who dared, and no one cared more for them. Still, some there were of this excepted class, bowed down with leaden griefs too heavy far to bear—afflictions much too strong, and misery too great, for one poor and tiny smile to lift from their hearts; who sought the generous aid of brother man to lighten their load, and to bid with sympathetic tenderness that smile to live and laugh above the world; but finding it not—made peace to die, and looked for Christmas in the grave! Of these, there were children, pining with hunger, cold, and nakedness; some wandering alone, filling up the throng of busy passers with their presence only—for their mission was a blank, the town was a desert, and the world was a void for them. Poor things! how their hearts beat and ached with despair and their heads reeled and throbbed with pain, as, wandering on, they gazed with streaming eyes into the windows of the dazzling shops, filled with rich and costly dresses spread in the most attractive form to catch the city's eye,—but they hurried on, for these were not for them. Others, as the poulterers' and confectioners' shops, loaded and groaning with a surfeit of plenty, decked with prizes of extraordinary size,

and specimens of wondrous ingenuity and intricacy ; these they would fain linger amongst, but the sight was more distressing to them than the former—they were not for them. Their tired feet struggled on—onwards—no rest—no peace—like belated ghosts hurried onwards by Destiny ; the world seemed not for them—onwards, still onwards, they pined, and starved, and shuffled to the grave. Of these there were parents—young—but whose brows were furrowed deeply by lines of misery—whose cheeks, blanched, pale, and withering with a premature age, served but to hide the skeleton beneath—whose hearts, seared by many a sorrow and heaving with many a sigh, groaned with misery ; who prayed for death or sought it in the flowing river or the poisoned cup,—for the world was not for them. Of these, there were men and women, venerable with age, bowed with infirmities, kissing the dust of poverty and wretchedness—unheard, unheeded, left to die and rot in their loneliness—for who cared ?—the world was not for them. Of these, there were poor half-brained idiots, loaded with heavy chains, and oppressed with a thousand wrongs of fancy's weaving ; or sitting upon a throne of misery, dealt out

(poor souls!) that mercy they had never known—giving with lavish hand the bounty they had never shared—dispensing justice from the prison, whither oppression, wrong, and famine had brought them. Of these, were maniacs, wild with madness, whose teeth gnashed from inward agonies—whose minds raved with horrid imaginings, and whose throats howled with demon might, fast bound in the den where neglect had driven them. Of these, also, were men of ordinary and men of extraordinary capacities—men whose words and thoughts had held the gaping multitude beneath with wonder and delight, enchanting the hearts and instructing the minds, yet suffering from contumely, neglect, and the want of the common necessities of life.—Of these let me speak, of these, pray you, listen.

Listen!—ye who are rich and ermined from sorrow—ye who are above want and ride in the chariot of luxury—ye who are hoarding and piling up the bright mass heap upon heap, — Listen! Listen! ye who read and think not; and ye who read and think, also listen,—for my words are of you and to you, and happy shall ye be, yea, happy shall I be, too, if one little hour shall be made

brighter—lighted with a ray of sympathy caught
from THE POET'S DREAM !

CHAPTER II.

BEING INTRODUCTORY.



T was a humble home, that Poet's home,—in a lone room situated in a low and wretched court, with a lonely window looking into a yet more lonely yard, and at the top of three flights of stairs which it was not at all times safe to travel—was our hero's abode fixed. It was a miserable room. The light seemed hopelessly to struggle its way through the lone window, the only one it possessed, which was small and inconvenient, with panes composed of greenish yellow glass, which withheld as much light as they ad-

mitted; the walls were blackened with smoke and dirt; the floor broken and uneven, with a wretched fire-grate

which yielded a faint heat from its smouldering fire : and, altogether, it seemed only an abode fitted for vice and the lowest steps of degradation. Yet it was a Poet's home ! A mattress stretched upon the floor, with a horse cloth thrown over it—that served for sheet, for blanket, coverlet, and all. An old-rickety table, reared for safety underneath the window ; a couple of chairs, a stool, with a few pots and pans, comprised the almost useless effects of this miserable abode. And yet, poor and unseemly though it was, there was an attempt at order, and the earthenware was clean and displayed in the fittest style to show to the best advantage ; and every part where manual labour was of avail was made cleanly, and arranged with as great a regard to comfort as possible.—Seated by the bed was an aged woman, watching anxiously over a youth who lay sick upon it, and though evidently asleep was suffering much. His heavy breathing and restless motion told of anxiety and pain ; and, as though he were catching at some imaginary foe, his hands would grasp the air, and at times his body would writhe and struggle as though he were engaged in some fierce conflict,—and when in the very climax and anguish of his dream, his

mother put her hands on him, he awoke with a start — the perspiration streaming from his forehead.

“Mother,” said he, “I have had an awfu’ dream.”

“My son,” replied she, “thou hast had a troubled one.”

“I dreamed, mother, I was walking side by side wi’ my dear Lucy, pouring into her ear the melody and the love o’ my heart; when a huge serpent seemed, as it were, to creep from the bank near which we were, and slowly, and without any power on my part to shake it off, began to coil itself around me, — and putting its suffocating and breathing mouth to mine, as soon as I was fully in its power, seemed as it were to inhale the very musings I strung for her ear, and fattened and grew as it drank them in. I struggled hard to shake it off, but I kenn’d it was too powerful for me, and the stronger it grew the weaker I became, until at length I waxed so faint and weak that I swooned away. How long I remained thus I know not, but it seemed as though a second consciousness came to me, and I could look back upon the scene I had left. Lucy was pining and broken-hearted at my loss; and, dressed in wretched weeds, seemed to mourn my memory like

one who has no hope left her but that old hope of sorrow—the grave. The serpent also I saw surrounding other Poets as it had done me, even unto death, and fattening upon their very existence in a similar way. At length I saw a long, black, and moving train: it was your funeral, mother, with Lucy dressed in the garb of poverty, following as chief mourner. The numbers who swelled the train consisted of poor folk, the friends we had formerly been intimate with. Oh mother! mother! it was a horrid sight; and as they heaped the cold soil upon you, I struggled for freedom from the serpent's power, and leaped to you in the grave,—on seeing which, Lucy screamed with alarm and fell lifeless to the ground. That scream awoke me, and still rings in my ears. Is it not horrible?"

"Heed it not, my love, it is but a dream."

"Aye, but 'twas a type of life, that dream—a type of life. Oh mother, what misery is the Poet's lot!"

"Ye shall back again, Rob, when ye are fitted, to your bonny cottage in the Highlands; a country labour is sweet, and a contented mind makes a happy heart."

“Not without a struggle, mother. I have entered the lists, and it were cowardice to retire without a throw. And should I succeed after all, oh then will we be happy! for to be one of earth’s favoured ones, and sit upon her pinnacles as a teacher and benefactor, is a joy inexpressible and without price! ’tis a bright jewel in life’s crown, and lends a glory to its existence!”

“Aye, Rob! ye say truly; but will it feed us—will it gie us o’ the things o’ this life—will it bring the gear with it?”

“Wealth, mother, lies at the feet of honour, and is subservient to it. Fear not; all will yet be well.”

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, which the mother hastened to answer.

“Does one Mr. Heatherden live here, ma’am?” asked a man in a very gruff voice.

“I ken he does, my man,” replied the poor woman. “What’s your will?”

“A parcel from Messrs. Collins and Cross. No answer, ma’am.”

Mrs. Heatherden took the parcel with a sigh, guessing well at once its meaning, and handed it to her son.

Robert, who had raised himself on the bed on hearing the enquiry, now sat upright, and seizing the packet with avidity, hastily broke it open, and taking a letter from the interior, hurriedly perused it ; then turning frantically to his parent, asked her, in a broken and husky tone, as the letter fell from his grasp—

“ Mother, am I ‘presumptive’? But they say I am, and therefore I must be. They tell me my lines ‘want strength, and are too rugged and unpolished.’ The fools ! ”

“ Rob ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Heatherden, in a reproofing tone.

“ Mother, I have no patience to see Ignorance hold up its head in judgement ; for that it is so, here is the key to criticism ” snatching up the letter. “ They tell me, as I ‘ am too poor to publish my poems on my own account, they would recommend me to try some one else, or see if they could not be done by commission, or otherwise obtain for them a list sufficient to guarantee them from loss.’ Oh the miserable serpents ! that would fatten on a poor soul like me ! But I must away—try some one else I will ! ”

"Not to night, my son! thou art feverish and weak, and it is a bitter night."

"Immediately, mother, immediately. Oh! I could not see you starve, and we are scarce possessed of that which shall bid us live a week."

"But to-morrow, Rob; go not forth to night."

"Oh to night! think of my dream, mother; said I not it was a type of life. This hour—it is not yet too late; it is Christmas, and there is feasting—must we starve?"

"You have friends, my son, who promised to support you. Surely they will be our help."

"Friends! No, I have no friends. I was tempted hither by flattering tongues, but their owners have fled at the sight of poverty; which is like a scarecrow to a field of wheat, the crows forsake it. But it matters not, I am well parted with their company."

And rising from the bed, without listening to any remonstrances to withhold him from his purpose, he folded himself carefully in a large shepherd's plaid; and kissing his poor mother, who stood by gazing upon him through a flood of tears, he promised her to be back soon, and hastily left the room.

He had not proceeded far, ere his notice was attracted to a poor woman with two children in her arms, seated on a door step. She was sobbing bitterly, and Robert asked her the cause.

"Poverty," she answered; "she had not a meal's meat, nor lodging for the night, and it was bitter cold."

"I am poor, too," said he; "the wind that cuts your cheek blows upon mine; but here is for the night—I cannot give you more, else would I."

"God bless you, Sir!" cried the poor wretch; "you have the widow's and the orphans' prayer. He will bless you!"

As he turned away, the words struck a chord in his heart, and he lifted his eyes upwards, dimmed with the tears of sympathy, for he felt that God had answered that prayer, and he was blessed indeed.

He was not long before he arrived at the publishers, Messrs. Gladden and Co., and entering at once with the air of one who has staked his all upon a cast, requested to speak with the principal. Being ushered into a private office by a clerk, who requested him to be seated until he should learn whether his employer was at liberty, Rob was for

a moment alone, when for the first time since he had left his mother he thought of his errand.

“What,” said he, “if they should refuse?” Then must I back again—back to the wild hills of my birth—back to Lucy, and at the plough learn that philosophy which shall teach me to forget. Oh! how fades the aspiring columns of our thoughts when faced to stern reality! Where is my high-souled ambition now? Where my spirit of independence? Alas! I have left them at home to preach comfort to my dear mother. When I was a poor plough-boy, I had not these misgivings; then the bright mornings were a pleasure, and full of hope—the evenings a joy, full of happiness, and my life was one of simplicity and merry toil; but now, there is a wild throb in my heart which excites my poor soul, and makes it more keenly and sensitively alive, as though there was a something ever prompting it onwards, through a chaos of imagination, to great achievements that should lift me up above the world; once every thing was simple and plain, now all is symbolic and full of meaning—old ways and old songs were then full of pleasure; but now, I would seek a fresh path and make a new song, and a voice within is ever leading me.”

At this moment his meditations were cut short by the entrance of Mr. Gladden.

He was a gentleman of the middle size, somewhat inclined to corpulency, rather light complexion, with a face beaming with intelligence and benevolence, and of gentlemanly and complaisant manners ; and when he entered the room, he did it in so inobtrusive a manner, and there was so much of kindness in his look, that Rob's heart at once opened towards him, and as though Mr. Gladden divined the purpose of our hero's visit, he requested him at once to re-seat himself, and inform him of his wants. Rob's story was soon told, for he felt no difficulty in unburdening his mind where so much of sympathy was apparent. Such is the human heart ; attempt to force it, you but shut it the closer in itself ; but touch it with kindness, like summer flowers to the sun, it at once opens its blossoms, and spreads its young buds to be nurtured in his rays.

When his tale was told, Mr. Gladden led him by degrees into the earlier history of his life, which he recited with simplicity and earnestness, which evidently gave the publisher pleasure, but when he told how he had been allured up to the great city, how

with a bursting heart and giddy brain he had waited for many a weary hour to procure an interview with his patron. Mr. Gladden's brow grew dark, and contracted itself as though he would shut out the view. And he spoke to him kindly and hopefully; he bade him trust no more to patronage and support—it was an exploded power—his own merit would at all times be his best help; and when he had taught the world once to listen, then were no fear for the future. “Meantime,” continued he, “be steadfast—see your own purpose well, and follow it; let your aim be noble, and, above all things, beware of writing for an idle hour—it is a rock on which many split. The ship whose destination is good, is a thing of interest and admiration to all, but the holiday vessel is a mere gilded toy, whose rattle ceases to please with its novelty.”

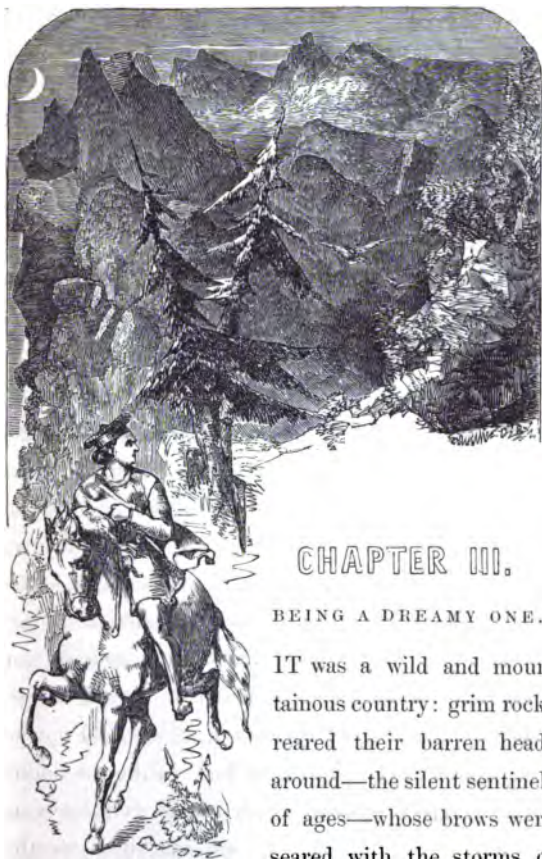
“I thank ye kindly, sir,” said Robert, “fra' my heart; I feel the truth o' what you say, and it is proud for me to know I ha'e ne'er ta'en up the pen for writing's sake.”

“Leave me your manuscripts then,” answered Mr. Gladden, “to-morrow being Christmas Day is somewhat a leisure one, and I will endeavour to

steal a glance at them, and should they meet my approval, you shall hear from me on the following morning."

"Here they are, sir; and at the back I have written you my address; it is a sair lodgment, but you'll find me there."

With this they parted:—the one to his business and the dull routine of a tradesman's life, "facts and figures"—the other gay and light of heart, hope ever in his view, borne on the wings of love, hastened to plant one little joy within his mother's breast. And long he sat talking with her that night—indulging the wild and speculative dreams of his fancy, cheering her heart with happy anticipations, and leading her thoughts from a bitter present to a sweet and glorious future. Oh! what a joyful night was that, as mutual in love, mutual in joy, mutual in everything—the mother and her son beguiled sad time away with promise of a blissful hour. And why was this? A kind word had done it all: it had put new life into a fainting heart, it had uplifted a sinking spirit—raised it from the depths of contumely and wrong, to the rank of honour and all its worthier emotions!



CHAPTER III.

BEING A DREAMY ONE.

IT was a wild and mountainous country: grim rocks reared their barren heads around—the silent sentinels of ages—whose brows were seared with the storms of time; whilst here and there might be seen jutting

from their huge clefts, like mighty arms, tall and stately pines, which waving backwards and forwards in the night breeze, appeared as though they would drive from their domain any intruder who might dare to encroach upon them ; and as the wind swept through their branches, now strong and loud in its strength, and now murmuring low and hoarsely as it fell, they were in very deed to the imagination the grisly keepers of the place. Along the base of the rocks were furze and bramble bushes, which spread out to the footpath, and almost sheltered it from the view, whilst ever and anon dark objects would flit across it, the natural tenants of the abode, wild in their seclusion, which gave an additional air of loneliness to the spot. The moon, in its first quarter, lent an indistinct and somewhat unholy light to the place, which at times was almost excluded altogether by the fast driving clouds. The eagle screamed from its airy nest ; the owl hooted and clapped its wings, and skimmed around every height in search for prey ; the bat wheeled its flickering flight in every nook, at times darting past the weary traveller's face, who, mounted on a wretched pony, and threading his way through the tortuous path, kept whizzing most unex-

pectedly past his ear, ever keeping him in continual alarm, which caused him instinctively to draw around him in tighter folds his shepherd's plaid, and press his jaded beast to a trot. The sound of its hoofs, however, re-echoing amongst the rocks, served but to increase his superstition and multiply his fears—for he could fancy a thousand demons rode in company, haunting him with an invisible presence, which to his acute imagination was more horrible than reality. And here, reader, let me tell you, if you have never travelled in such a situation, it is a trying one for the nerves,—especially if your mind has been previously stored with ghostly and supernatural legends, with the haunts of fairies, warlocks, and witches, and the gambols of elves, demons, and all the characteristics of such imaginary beings ; and let your mind be ever so well fortified with the philosophy of learning and experience, you cannot overcome, for the life of you, the fear of these flimsy creatures which have existence only in the brain and the fertility of the imagination. No ! Set out as you will with all the determination and fortitude you can command, these little spirits of solitude will haunt you still : in every bush—you shall see a hundred eyes peeping from

their leafy screen—every nook shall be filled with the gambols of their tiny race—every tree shall live with the thousands that hang upon its leaves ; and in the wind—that mysterious and viewless creation—the prancing and impatient steed of these mind-born beings—shall be heard the shouts of joy, the cries of triumph, the denunciations of revenge, or the howlings of despair,—sent forth from their invisible world !

Despite, however, these imaginary fears which surrounded our hero, and kept him constantly on the alert, he endeavoured to keep up his courage, and heedless of the beatings of his throbbing heart, continued his course. It was still with no little gratification that he beheld, twinkling in the distance, what he imagined to be the cheerful light of some poor cottager, isolated from the world, in the dreary gloom before him ; and he accelerated his speed in the hope of being able to find shelter and repose for himself and his poor jaded beast for the night—inwardly congratulating his good fortune on the circumstance, which seemed thus so opportunely to present itself. The poor animal, hungry and fatigued though it was, and as eager for rest as its master, required the persuasion of all Rob's horsemanship

to make it advance ; and it was with no little surprise, when he approached near to the place, that he discovered the light to proceed from a cave, which was hewn out of the solid rock, over the entrance to which was engraven on the stone the word "OBLIVION." From its interior issued a perfect chaos of discordant sounds—of howlings of disturbed spirits and groanings of suffering ghosts : but, above them all, he could hear chaunted with horrid and supernatural voice, an invitation to him to enter ; and, as he was still hesitating whether to turn and fly from the accursed spot, or wait the issue of the adventure, an aged Spirit, with a long and flowing beard, and clad in a dark mantle or gown, came from the cave, and bade him fear not.

"And who art thou," said Robert, "who dwellest in this horrid place ?"

"My name replied the Spirit, "is DESTINY." "I have the keeping of two Temples. One is that of OBLIVION and the PAST—which is before thee ; the other, which I can also show thee, is that of FAME and the FUTURE."

"Show me these, if thou art not forbid," asked Rob, eagerly.

" Dismount and follow ! " answered the Spirit.

And as he spoke, the ghostly choir, which first invited Rob to enter, took up the words, and chaunted back with the faith of echo—

" Dismount and follow !—dismount and follow ! " until the sounds were lost in the distance.

With trembling steps he obeyed the summons and followed his conductor into the interior of the cave, the exterior of which had nothing in its appearance premonitory of the tremendous scene which now disclosed itself to his astonished vision !—for, instead of being in a cave, he found himself in a Temple of such immensity, as the wildest conceptions of human fancy never pictured—a Temple whose roof was supported on pillars of such colossal magnitude that their summits were lost in impenetrable gloom, whilst on every side appeared endless avenues of dreary vastness—the boundless receptacles and magazines of ages, wherein were stored all the Forgotten of the Past. Here were deposited in promiscuous assemblage the forms of enormous and now unknown animals of every monstrous and horrible shape—of singular and gigantic trees and other vegetable products, which in successive eras and through countless durations have

germinated, flourished, and disappeared from the pre-Adamite earth. Here, too, were ranged the remains of architecture, from the incipient and crudest erection of a barbaric age, to the palatial magnificence of later years, with coeval relics of primitive history. Here, too, were records of the ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, and Indian dynasties, and of immemorial nations who have not left even a name to indicate their former existence! Here, too, were deposited noble and exalted works of art, groups of statuary, gigantic erections, exquisite paintings, immense engines of warfare and military trophies, and remains of kingly splendour, pomp, and magnificence. Here, too, were to be seen innumerable idols and other objects of superstitious veneration, the silent and mouldering witnesses of the debasing vanity of man! Here, too, were domestic and warlike implements, reared side by side, mechanical contrivances, and everything characteristic of savage and civilized life of every age, nation, and clime—everything that science could discover—that art could invent—that luxury could suggest—and that necessity could require, was to be found in this immense storehouse of unrecorded Time! In addition to all that the eye had

seen, the ear had heard, and the hand had done, were lidless coffins, with their ghastly and half decomposed tenants exposed to view, who comprised the dead of every age, race, sex, and station, from the haughty monarch, who had swayed his kingdom with the ambitious pride of power, whose end was the grave and an oblivious death ;—to the humble peasant who knew of no to-morrow and lived only in his little present—from the aged patriarch to the tender infant—from the man of genius to the untutored boor—and from the polished beauty to the repulsive savage ! Amidst the bewilderment of this wondrous scene, and the infinite diversity of dim objects which surrounded Rob, and oppressed him with a painful sense of overwhelming vastness, were piles of innumerable volumes of ancient and forgotten records of men's thoughts and inventions. All—all, however, were fast hastening to dissolution. The worms and moths and other creeping things were preying and festering on the ruins and mouldering forms of a departed life ; whilst rust and decay, the sure and silent followers of neglect, were stamping the impress of eternal doom on the noblest and most enduring monuments of nature and art !

As Rob entered this mighty mausoleum of the Past with his Spirit-guide, the dead seemed momentarily animated with life at the presence of the living, and gibed and grinned at him and stretched forth their long and bony hands as though they would grasp him, and laughed and mocked at his fears with the might and fury of demons,—whilst the animal forms likewise manifested a corresponding energy, and appeared about to exhibit the terrific powers of their former destructive life; and their deafening roars and yells chorussed horribly with the screams of their scarcely more human compeers, overpowered Rob with terror, till reassured by his guide of his protection and power.

Onwards, still onwards, he traversed many a mighty avenue, the gloomy repository of ages—the receptacle of many a fabled monster of antiquity; yet onwards still they reached, far, far away in the distance—further than the aching sight could survey, and desolation and decay filled them all!

“What mean these, good Spirit?” asked Rob.

“This, as I told thee, is the Temple of OBLIVION, and these which thou beholdest are the Forgotten of the Past. Wouldst thou look back into

Time ?—here shalt thou find all that thou seekest !”

“ Show me.”

“ What ? ”

“ Anything.”

“ Seeker of Fame, look and learn !”

And, “ Look and learn !—look and learn !” was chaunted by the spirits.

Immediately a smoke rose from the earth—the dead were hushed ; and as the vapour cleared away a beautiful landscape appeared before them.

It was a little valley, beautifully embosomed in the mountains, whose summits were crowned with stately pine, and whose sides were clothed with heather. A mountain stream of purest water ran through the centre of the valley ; and standing by its side, almost overshadowed with trees, was a small white-washed cottage, with roses and honeysuckles growing over its porch, and a neat garden in front which was carefully trimmed and most tastefully arranged. The blue smoke curled gracefully through the trees from the little chimney, and gave an air of life and freshness to the place. It was one of those gems of landscape scenery which so gladden the painter's eye—the very ideal of a poet's home—a spot seldom met

with, but when once seen, never forgotten. And well might our hero's heart beat thick with joy, for in that little cot did he first behold the light of day ; where life and joy with him came budding into existence together ; where his earliest—and being earliest, most golden—pleasures were experienced ; where his fancy pictured neither care nor sorrow, but only sunshine. And who is that wanderer whose heart is so cold that it leaps not with emotions of love, whose blood tingles not with a refreshing joy, whose mind is not “crowded with thick coming fancies,” and whose eyes are not dimmed,—after a long absence, at the sight of his childhood's home ? Is there a love—an earthly one—purer or more sacred, and are not such spots consecrated ground in the eyes of every one ? For oh ! with what desolation and sorrow do we regard their destruction ! Yet no—not to all. There are men (and experience can tell us of many) who from some humble home have risen with the upstart pride of purse, who look back to their origin with shame, and acknowledge with a blush the parents who gave them birth. Men are they, who are every day crushing and grinding the poor herd who are beneath them, with their inso-

lence and low-born tyranny, forgetting that of *these* but yesterday they *were*; and triumphing in the titles purchased only too often with the wealth accumulated by oppression—grinding, fatal, bankruptcy oppression; and society, whilst it talks loudly of principle, and shouts bravely against injustice, quietly suffers them to enter her most charmed circles, nor ever thinks to question their pretensions so long as they have a full pocket and a good name at their bankers to support them.

The time pictured in the landscape was evening—an hour which lent an additional charm to the scene; for the setting sun, as it sank slowly behind the distant hills, gilded the valley with his richest rays, whilst the broad shadows and sombre tints of evening gave it a repose and breadth which were its greatest beauty. The birds were chorusing their sweet vespers to the declining day—now with many voices, now for a moment silent—and then, as though they all joined by one instinctive desire, would burst forth in one rich peal, which made the woods re-echo with their joy; and as again this would die away, the thrush, perched upon the loftiest branches, would pour its rich melody forth like a stream of

pure delight, enchanting the listener with its melodiousness. Oh! ye musicians of the green woods—Nature's own choir—ye are fit instruments to praise the works of an Almighty Power! for what art can rival your sweetness, tuned as ye are to a Creator's ear!

Rob gazed silently and fondly upon the scene, and he felt, as he gazed, how much he had lost for Fame. Peace and contentment, the portion of his earlier days, were his no more. Cares, restless and feverish anxieties, and blighted hopes, alone were his rewards. He had sacrificed his truest joys at the altar of ambition, and he felt for the first time how great was the price he had paid for a futurity. Fain would he have returned—but no, the past was gone! New feelings and new passions were in his breast, whose desires had become a power he could not resist, and in whose fulfilment only could he find a peace.

“Why show me this?” asked he of his conductor.

“Look and learn,” answered the Spirit.

And again the voices echoed: “Look and learn!—look and learn!”

But the scene had changed. The warm and roseate sky had become cold and grey. The trees, stripped of their bright foliage, stood naked to the cold

blast, and the fields once so green and smiling, were now covered with the snows of winter. Still there was beauty on the landscape, for pure and fresh was the breath of Nature,—and her face, though pale and cold, yet smiled with content as when the first summer spread over her countenance.

It was the Eve of the New Year. From the cottage windows shone the warm firelight, a welcome to the wanderer. A figure crossed the scene. It was that of a youth, muffled in his plaid, who, with elated steps seemed to skip along, as though to give vent to the natural elasticity of his spirits. Stopping at one of the larger cottages, he knocked at the door, and then lifting the latch, was about to enter, when a fair-haired child ran blithsomenly to meet him with the true welcome of youth : he took it in his arms, and saluting it with a kiss, carried it into the house, where the reception of the child was given not less heartily by its parents, who were the owners of the cottage. Several other guests had already assembled, who likewise extended their welcome to the youth with many a hearty shake of the hand, and it was easily to be perceived that he was an universal favourite.

It was an evening merry making in honour of the season; and, after a slight repast, the room was cleared of all its superabundant furniture for a dance. The piper produced his pipes, which he had lying in readiness in a corner of the room: partners were chosen, the music struck up the tune of "Tullochgorum," and all was animation and excitement. The first couple consisted of our hero, whose welcome we have just described, and a blushing damsel of sixteen, between whom it was evident there had been a previous acquaintance, from the familiarity of Rob. She was rather small and slender, with hair of rich light brown colour and eyes of the same hue, large and expressive; and her cheek fair as a lily's leaf, over which had stolen the mantling blush of virtue, the seal of inward purity of thought and stamp of goodness—

"The theme of many an after song."

Next to them stood the exciseman, a short thick fellow, with a face as full of mischief and fun as could well be imagined. He was a bachelor, gay and light of heart, enjoying every hour as it passed, —living the present, careless of the future; and in the souter's wife he had found a partner well suited

to him. Many a sly keg had he winked at, for he was not the man to betray the friend he had found so much comfort in; and it was by these means he had more of the people's good will than generally fell to the lot of one of his vocation. Next to these stood the miller—a good-humoured jolly fellow, with a full round face, which was constantly smiling; the souther, full of wit and story; the smith, a tall powerful fellow; and about twenty others,—each mated according to his fancy.

It was a long room, well suited for a dance; and at the upper end, suspended from the rafters, was the Christmas Bush, composed of holly, fir, laurels, and other evergreens, and bedecked with oranges, apples, and a variety of other ornaments, and projecting from its centre was a huge piece of mistletoe, the crowning glory of the whole,—for where is the Christmas Bush would be perfect without it? Down the middle went Rob with his lovely partner; the exciseman caught the souther's wife by the waist, and round and round in many a mazy whirl they went, and louder and louder blew the piper with the excitement of the scene. It was a privilege duly assumed by the males, which the females, nothing

loth, accepted,—that as each couple reached the upper end of the room where the mistletoe hung so conspicuously, to salute their partners with a kiss; and as Rob set the example with Lucy, it was most strictly followed by the rest.

Scarcely had the dance concluded and the refreshments made the circuit of the room, ere the miller leaped from his seat, and bidding the piper “blaw wi’ birr,”* commenced the Highland Fling, which he danced with wondrous energy, cracking his thumbs and stamping the ground in his rapid turns, to the applause and satisfaction of the company. Whilst this was going on, and all were evidently engaged in watching the miller’s dance, Rob was seated in a far corner of the room, partially screened from the view with Lucy by his side, round whose waist his arm was gently thrown, whilst in a low voice inaudible except to her ear, where each accent told like angel’s music, he whispered tales of happiness! Poor fellow! he knew not what he was doing; he never stopped to count the throbbings of his breast; he was unconscious of its tumult; and whilst he besieged her heart, he guessed not his own was

* Blow with strength.

capitulating. No ; it was happiness, — innocent, thrilling, all-absorbing happiness for the time : full of a bright future, but bringing many a care and anxious wish in its train,—the gilded buds of promise that tempt us on, yet teach us ever as we approach them that our pleasures are of earth. Yes—

Our joys are bridal scenes, when seen from far,
For hope engilds them with its richest hues ;
Makes bitter sweet, and hides each ulcerous care,
And even sadness with its like imbues.
But visions fade when brought to nearer view,
And truth to fiction proves an arrant thief.
For, 'stead of bridal trains in gayest hue,
Our joy does turn to sad and funeral grief ;
And sweet is sour, and sore is sad to see—
And woe most grievous comes with sighs and tears—
And every comfort from our sorrows flee,
And leaves us only with our present fears ;—
For such proud man in life is doomed to tell
His festal ringing is his funeral knell !

From that moment, his every thought was hers ; he loved—yes loved, yet knew it not. His eye followed her wherever she went ; every little action was faithfully recorded in his memory—every look answered—every sigh re-echoed.

The clock struck twelve ! It was answered with a shout which tolled the knell of the Past as it was

a welcome to the Future! Yes!—the Old Year was dead, and the New Year danced upon its grave; it was trodden upon as an enemy and all its kindnesses forgotten; its relics were priceless—its acts valueless—its stock a bankrupt one; it had gone down to oblivion and nothingness, and the parasite, who had fawned upon it in its hour of plenty, and pandered to its desires, curled his lip in derision, and fattened whilst he flattered at a richer board. Oh! base ingratitude that teaches us to look at the shade, and makes us forget the good deeds of Friendship in the blots which mortality has sprinkled upon it!

Some there were, who had crept out unperceived, and now loudly clamoured at the door for admission to bring in the New Year; and as they rushed into the house, they shouted, wild with excitement and joy, the happy wishes of the day! It was a bustling scene, and full of mirth and humour. The young men saluted the young lasses with a kiss, who, with feigned resistance laughed at each repetition. The 'auld folks,' seated familiarly together, enjoyed the gambols and tricks of the younger, or with a serious gravity speculated in hints upon the future matches that should arise from this joyous night's

meeting—or mayhap with a sigh recalled those days when they themselves were young. Still all was mirth and happiness; and if passing cares should chance to rise—as when will they not? for they are very ghosts to haunt you, and like death are always unseasonable—they were immediately put down in the universal joy and gaiety of the scene. Wishes and welcomes hung on every lip and made music in every ear, and to a late hour the song and the jest—the joke and the dance, were kept up with unwearied vigour.

But the scene gradually dissolved, and faded into a misty light, and the noise of mirth died away in the distance: yet, ere the last faint sound had passed for ever into silence, another scene had sprung up, phoenix-like, from the dissolution of the former. Again the cottage in the valley and the hills around, with Rob and Lucy walking side by side on their way home from the merry-making.

It was a bright night, moonlight: all was at rest—all was peace and beauty! Not a breath of air to wake the grove—not a cloud to dim the sky, but floating on through realms of space the moon held on her way. It has been said, and is yet a rich

theme with the poet, that the moon exerts a power over the heart, and makes it open its most secret treasures of thought like flowers in the sunshine. Rob felt and acknowledged its influence: his voice trembled with emotion; his heart beat violently within his breast, and his pulse vibrated with love—the young emotion of his soul. For some time he walked silently and almost unconsciously on, for his heart was too full for utterance, and his companion, like a young dove in its first flight, fluttered at his side—happy in the first spring of a new feeling, which opened the road of her woman's futurity, and revealed to her only the joys which blossomed on its pathway. At length, with one arm outstretched, and the other drawing her yet closer to him, Rob spoke:

“Oh Lucy, is't no a lovely night—is't no a beautiful, a holy one! See ye not the MAKER in the scene? Is not His hand stamped upon all—hear ye not His voice in the silence speaking peace and comfort to man? It reminds me o' the mother's eye, shedding its radiance o'er her loved ones—looking calmly yet anxiously down upon her sleeping children! Tells it not of love—beams it not with

hope? Is not earth a child of Heaven—are not we His holy care? Oh Lucy, can we look upon a scene like this and lay our hands upon our hearts and say there is no God? The lie would fester upon the lip, and he who uttered it would quake at his own audacity! And yet there are those deaf to the voice of conscience, and dead to the whisperings of Nature! Men who set themselves up standards of perfection and wisdom, and think their unbelief a screen to cover their blasphemous iniquities—a rock that shall hide them from an offended Creator; yet fear and mistrust the very workings of their own doctrines. Heavens! He is a merciful God who can daily suffer such an impious ingratitude, and leave it so long unpunished!”

At this our hero was again silent. His eye wandered occasionally over the beautiful landscape before him, or settled upon the lovely image at his side; and ever as he did so, a sigh would involuntarily escape from his lips, which betrayed the workings of the spirit within him, and told of the fever raging in his bosom.

“Au mun bid ye gude nicht here, Rob,” said Lucy, after they had gone some little distance fur-

ther, "for this is my father's thatch, and aw'im muckle obleeged to ye for your company."

"Ye'll no leave me yet," asked Rob, supplicatingly.

"And what for no'?"

"The night is so fair," answered he, "and it is so pleasant to walk in the moonlight."

"Aye, but the morrow comes fu' soon, and with it comes the daily toil which weary limbs and aching eyes are no o'er weel fitted for. So once more, Rob, gude night, and pleasant fa' the slumbers o'er ye!"

He took the proffered hand which was extended in farewell, and drawing her closer to him, he gently placed his arm around her neck—imprinted a kiss upon her lips, and whispered something soft as angel's breath: but what?—it was hard to tell, suffice it to say, she forgot the morrow and the morrow's toil, and took another stroll with him in the moonlight.

But the scene again changed; the caverns assumed their true aspect, arrayed in all the horrors of the past—a contrast to the beauty of the vision which had now faded, and was passed for ever, and bitter was the lesson which it had taught.

"Would'st thou behold more?" inquired the Spirit, after a pause.

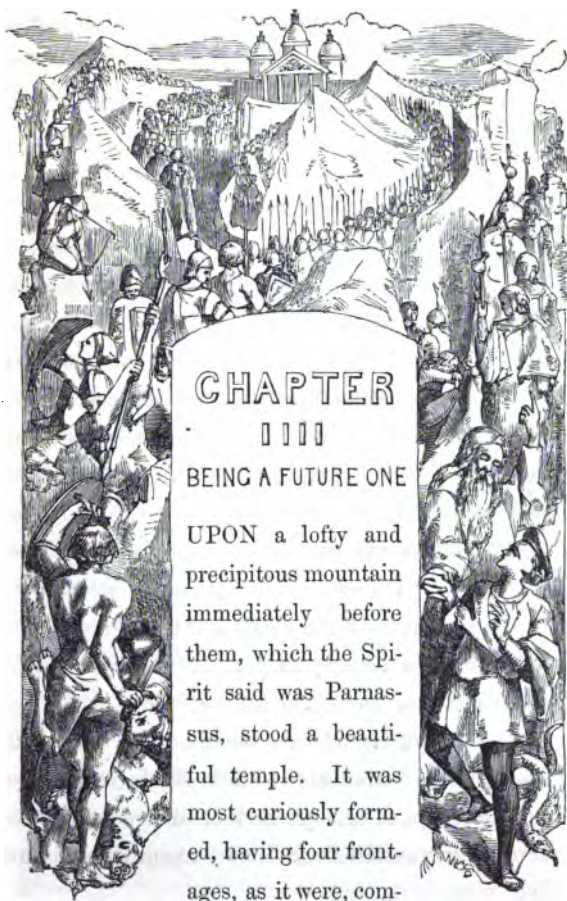
"In mercy, no!" cried Rob, in an agony of sorrow. "Past happiness mocks my present ambition, and shows me how much, and what I've sacrificed for Fame."

"Yet hast thou not seen of the Future? There perchance is thy recompense," answered the Spirit.

"Shew me then of that; but oh! no more of those bright visions which have passed; they tear my heart asunder with thoughts which I dare not utter! When I think of them, and what I was, and now and what I am, oh God! I could put an end to all; but Thou, merciful being, has yet some golden links which bind me fast to earth, and fix my hopes, my joys, my all upon a future. Shew me, then, of that which is to come, and let the past be forgotten and for ever, or remembered only as a beautiful dream, which has no reality to stamp its value in the affections.

"Follow me, then!" spoke the Spirit.

And taking him by the hand, he led him gently away, when, striking the sides of the rocks they opened before them, and the cool winds fanned Rob's fevered brow, and brought new strength to his fainting spirit.



CHAPTER

IIII

BEING A FUTURE ONE

UPON a lofty and precipitous mountain immediately before them, which the Spirit said was Parnasus, stood a beautiful temple. It was most curiously formed, having four frontages, as it were, com-

posed of the four orders of architecture, a front being dedicated to each, which gave it a rare and magnificent appearance. Its pillars were of exquisite and varied marbles, arranged with the most consummate taste and skill, and harmonizing throughout. A noble flight of steps led to each entrance, which was adorned with the rarest specimens of statuary, each perfect in its kind—the masterpiece of its school, and the glory of its country. In the centre of each was a large statue of Fame, with her wings outstretched and her trumpet to her mouth, in the act of proclaiming the noble deeds of her votaries ; and surrounding the building was Apollo, the Muses and the Sphinx, with more of equal pretensions ; as also Mars, Vulcan, and other inferior ones ; and before each figure of Fame there burned a lamp, whose brilliance illumined and adorned the world.

Many paths leading to the Temple wound their tortuous course round the sides of the mountain, or ascended abruptly upwards—these were filled with the hundreds journeying on their pilgrimage of hope. Surrounding the base yawned an abyss, and at its bottom ran the waters of Lethe, which flowed into a huge lake, at the end of which ran a cataract, over

whose falls most of the offerings intended for Fame were washed into the caves of Oblivion. This abyss was crossed by numerous bridges, so constructed that they admitted of no return; and the candidate for the Temple's honours, if he failed in his attempt, or his offering was anywise unworthy, was precipitated into the gulph below, and was never more heard of; so that constantly there were scores who were being thus sacrificed to their vain ambition;—like the bubble which for awhile floats vauntingly in the rainbowed hues of promise, but bursts as it ascends to a rarer atmosphere, and leaves not a vestige to remember us of its beauty.

But our hero saw not these; his eyes were fixed upon the Temple beyond, and he was absorbed in its admiration.

“How beautiful!” exclaimed he.

“Would'st ascend and see within?” asked the Spirit.

“Aye,” answered Rob, eagerly, “if 'tis not forbid.”

“Nay, my son,” replied the Spirit; “it is open unto all who have courage to attempt. See, even now, how many would essay the task! The thousands starting at its base—the hundreds reposing

mid-way up, whilst units only crown the height ; but come, lend me thy hand, and I will assist thee on the journey."

And crossing one of the narrow bridges before them, they began the ascent.

At first it was comparatively easy and pleasant ; the scent of flowers filled the air—the music of birds waked the grove, and their path was covered with the carpets of spring ; the race of ambition here began—youth and age strove side by side, and commenced their career together—some started off madly, at a pace too great to continue ; others, in whose breast desire had scarce kindled enthusiasm, languidly and feebly held on, whilst, again, a few there were who coolly and resolutely braced themselves up for the trial, with a determination to overcome fatigue, prejudice, or hardship, and endure to the end ; some leaped up the shorter, yet steeper and more difficult paths, which others essaying, fell backwards and rolled into the gulph below ; some rested on the wayside, feigning to be content with that they had gained, and gazing with an eye of jealousy upon those who passed on their journey, or endeavoured to throw difficulties in their path, as

they painted the dangers of procedure, and detracted from the abilities of their rivals.

It was a scene of passion and of beauty—of riotings and discords — of envyings, malice, and hatred,—yet fragrant with the flowers of hope, and gay with the blossomings of joy. It was a path of peace and a field of war ; roses and thorns sprung up together, and twined as on one common stem : and though there were all things of good, yet were negative evils there to counterbalance them — as barriers to check the presumptive and scare the timid and unworthy from following in the race of Fame.

As they journeyed higher, the way became more difficult and dangerous ; huge rocks of public opinion reared their heads before them which prejudice had made slippery as ice and over which it was imperative they must travel or remain content and in comparative obscurity—embankments whose sides were covered with brambles, armed with the sharpest thorns of criticism and under the shelter of which the serpent hissed its venom, or darted with fury upon the careworn traveller, as he toiled on his weary pilgrimage ; but to our hero every difficulty vanished

under the sustaining help of his guide. Still many a noble spirit sunk in despair beneath the trial—many a brave heart once pregnant with immortality burst in its giant strength or withered with a premature decay—for want of a cheering voice to inspirit them on their way; for them, difficulties increased and dangers multiplied; without the patronage of power, opinion often reared an insurmountable front, and the serpent envy keened its tooth and hissed with tenfold malignance. Yet, ever as they died, as if to mock oblivion, one lovely flower sprung from their decay, and sent its fragrance o'er the world !

They gained the summit, the earth was at their feet and before them, in all the pride of ages, stood that Temple which was the glory of the gods and the adoration of the world. Its symmetry was perfection, based upon a rock; Time bowed, as to its superior, nor dared to desecrate it with his mildewing hand, or even breathe one little leaf's decay upon the velvet sward that led to its entrance. The voice of music floated in the air and the breath of flowers hung upon the breeze; birds of heavenly plumage flew over their heads, or perched on the immortal bay, which flourished in its groves, caroled with joy. All was

happiness, for all was perfect; and as they entered within the Temple's interior, the organ swelled its sublimest notes, bidding them welcome. How different to those noisome and pestiferous caverns they had just left; no wreck was here, nor rust, nor moth, death nor decay, for all was immortality and supremest excellence, the perfection and beauty of ages!

Within, the Temple was divided into three parts by two noble rows of pillars which ran down its centre—these arching at the top supported the dome, which was of most magnificent fret-work, and ornamented with devices emblematical of the goddess who presided. At the end opposite the entrance stood an altar elaborately carved, and entwined with laurel and bay leaves, branches of which decorated the walls, or hung in festoons from the roof; behind the altar was suspended a silken screen of the purest white, and projecting from the sides waved the flags and banners of the brave. Noble statues of veinless marble encircled the building, or were arranged in rows up its centre. Poets, philosophers, statesmen, musicians, men of science and divinity, philanthropists, soldiers, all of eminence of every class, stood

side by side the monuments of great and wondrous thought and noble daring—priceless relics of a nation's glory—true emblems of a country's greatness—memorials of a city's pride—the brightest testimony of immortal genius;—these everywhere met the eye. Around the altar were arranged smoking censers, which filled the Temple with their ambrosial fragrance, and at its foot offerings fresh from the mind, yet tested invaluable and deserving of immortality, for none were deemed worthy as an offering there, but such as had conquered the prejudices, and gained the esteem of the world.

“Tell me,” asked Rob, “if thou hast power to read the future; shall I rest here?”

“Look and learn!” answered the Spirit.

And, touching the altar with a long white wand which he held in his hand, a wreath of smoke arose from it, and, curling upwards, faded into air. No sooner, however, was it dispelled, than beyond it, on the screen, appeared a landscape, similar in character to those he had beheld when in the caves of Oblivion, for it also exhibited to him the scenes of his early home.

In the foreground stood a field of barley, and being harvest-time, the reapers were busy cutting it down and binding it into sheaves, whilst numerous gleaners followed expectantly : foremost in the scene and somewhat apart from the rest were Rob and Lucy. In his right hand the reaping hook hung idly—in his left a flower which he had just plucked, and on which he gazed for awhile thoughtfully, but when Lucy ceased from her gleanings to see what delayed him, Rob offered her the flower, which she took with a smile, and placed in her bosom.

“ Oh Lucy !” said he, “ but your bonny e’en have lighted my heart with a wild and melancholy pleasure—since the day I first saw you, my lass, it has beat but for you ; and the bright thoughts attendant upon such a glorious imagery has made my mind lofty and independent, and taught my heart to prompt it to sweet thought and language, I knew not until now !”—

“ How say ye, Rob ?” asked she, enquiringly.

“ I would do something, Lucy, deserving of that night ;” replied he ; “ something shall make me worthy of the love you then plighted me, for it stands in my memory like the first mark of Time ; and I

could almost believe I never lived until then—such a change has that hour worked within me !”

“ That nicht was dear to me, Rob,” answered she. “ I never look out upon the beautiful moonlight but I think o’ the vows you then made me, nor upon those scenes which daily greet me, but my heart speaks again the pledges I gave ye.”

“ Still love me, dearest—for your love it is prompts me with such noble thoughts, and finds fresh food for my ambition. Oh Lucy ! know ye lass, your love it is has waked a chord in my breast other than affection I never felt till now ! My heart beats but for you—but my brain throbs with wild anticipations of a yet more glorious future, when the laurel shall entwine its immortal crown around my brow, and on my tombstone shall be engraven more than the simple memory which marks where humble people lay ! ”

“ I no ken ye, Rob,” said Lucy ; “ but my love is aye your ain.”

“ Bide ye yet, and ye shall ken me,” replied he ; “ aye, and this great world too shall ken me, when I will sing my Lucy’s praise in language the richest and the fairest e’en might envy.”

"Tell me what mean ye," asked she, enquiringly.

"There are great men, Lucy, whose deeds live after them—whose minds shed a fragrance when their body is mouldering in decay ; as the rose, their perfume is imperishable—it lives for ever ! Men they are who come not upon this miserable world to crawl through it, and fatten as they crawl, like some vile insect, and no more,—but to improve the endowment which God has given them—like the servant who made his one talent, ten. Such would I be—aye, and such will I be, for the germ quickens within, and prompts me with noble thoughts unto an honorable future."

The reaping hook still hung idly in his hand, and his spirit, as though yearning after a more glorious destiny, seemed to swell within him, and his eyes kindled with the enthusiasm which lights to fame. He could toil no more thus ; henceforth the head, and not the hand, was to work out his futurity.

With this feeling, strong and fresh within him, he left the field, after parting kindly with Lucy, and sought his peasant's home. His mother, his only parent, yet doubly loved and cherished by him in her widowhood, met him at its threshold and observ-

ing at a glance the anxious look which overshadowed his countenance, enquired the cause of his seeming depression.

"It's just nothing, mother," said he, "but the poor thought which changes with every wind—now sad, now gay—always varying, constant never."

"The guid God bless thee, my son! but it grieves me to ken thee so," replied she, and with a portentous sigh, she turned away to prepare their evening meal.

From that time Rob joined the reapers no more, for the thirst of ambition had taken deep possession of his soul, he yearned for it with all the zeal of a young and ardent aspiran, and he resolved to fulfil those desires regardless of the cost, and confident in the power which thus urged him onwards; he knew that a life devoted to literature was full of care and anxiety; he expected to meet with disappointments at the outset, and as he remembered the fates of others,—he thought he himself might possibly have to shake hands with want, and even know the pangs of hunger,—but he did not despair. Hope sat upon the cup, and swam on its surface, and as he looked into its depths, all was rainbowed with beauty, and he hesitated not to drink the draught!

“Is not the world a wide and extended garden?” said he, “and are we not sent here to cultivate and improve it? are not its virtues flowers, and is not sin the weed that springs up and chokes them? Is not intellect the fairest and most beautiful of its flowers? and is not ignorance the rankest and most loathsome of its weeds?—let me then be a gardener of flowers and an enemy to the weeds that would harm them!—but,” hesitated he, “my poor mother!” and his heart swelled as he thought of her.—“Yet will I strive for thee; we will eat the same bread and drink from the same spring;—the little that I have in store will serve us yet awhile, and when that is gone, and my hopes be still without fulfilment, He will find a shelter and a meal for the widow and her orphan child!”

CHAPTER V.

BEING A CONTINUATION.



HE landscape faded ; like the waking from a dream it passed away. In its place uprose houses and churches, and public buildings ; and long streets, crowded with passengers of every grade, and thronged with vehicles of every description. There was the gay and glittering chariot of the peer, swinging proudly to and fro, as though conscious of the

coronet upon its panels and the haughty form that lolled within : there was the lower, yet equally assuming phaeton of city life, swelling itself in rivalry, like the frog in the fable, and trying to look big as its neighbour : there was the bold and bullying 'bus, coarse and impudent as a prizefighter ;

and the little cab, cunning as a lawyer, but quicker, darting like lightning into every narrow opening on its passage, and threading and winding its way through the busy throng with a speed and dexterity that nothing but a cab could attain : and then, to make up the whole, there was the gig, light and fragile as pleasure ; and the heavy cart, and still heavier and more ponderous waggon—staid, sober, and plodding as business ; with other smaller fry, in endless variety and change.

Of passengers, the variety was even greater. Noble jostled plebeian—plebeian trod upon the heel of noble,—so fine and imperceptible was the link which joined them in the chain of brotherhood. Thus :—the first rank looked down to and patronised the second, which again acknowledged the third ; and so the third and the first were united by the second, which again bowed to the one below ; and so on down to the humblest—which has ever one above itself to look up to and by whom *it* is acknowledged.

Such were Rob's thoughts as, wandering onwards through the busy streets, he marked their ever-varying character with attention, and pondered with amazement on their change. To him, it was as a

great book of life, and in it were told tales of love and hate, good and ill, happiness and misery, success and disappointment,—ever mingling together, and threading the busy labyrinth of life whose end was the grave!

His way lay along the Strand. Lord Highflown, his patron, had appointed that he should call upon him whenever he came to London; and it was towards the fashionable regions where his lordship dwelt that he now bent his steps.

When he found the house his heart swelled within him, big with anticipations of the future; and it was with no little pride he raised the ponderous brass knocker to summon the attention of its inmates, nor was he less surprised to find that he had several times to repeat the application before any notice was apparently taken of his presence. A footman in gay livery answered the door, and looked at Rob with frowning consequence, as though he would question his right to annoy him, by having to open the door for one, in his estimation, so far beneath him; and would have referred our hero to the area bell, had not Rob quickly asked for his master; at the same time stating his name and where he came

from, and that his lordship had desired him to call whenever he came to town.

"You had better call again," said the man, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Give me your name and business, and I will forward it to my lord, and you can call to-morrow for his answer."

"He bade me call," replied Rob, remonstratively, "and if you will just take in my name, you will see it will be all right."

"His lordship is very busy, and must not be disturbed at the present time on any account," said the man, not feeling quite so certain about its being all right.

"If you will allow me, then," answered Rob, "I will just step in and write a note to him."

"It is against orders," replied the lacquey; "you must call again." And with that he closed the door.

"Is this patronage, or is it merely the ways of high life!" soliloquised Rob, as he turned away. "Nay," continued he, "I must not condemn the master for the man."

Calling at a tavern in the neighbourhood, he procured pen, ink, and paper, and writing a polite

note, modestly soliciting his Lordship's influence. He hastened once more to his Lordship's house, and left it with the footman.

Slowly and sadly Rob walked away, heavy with disappointment ; whither he went he knew not ; he had no fixed purpose for the moment, but gave the reins to his errant thoughts, and strolled heedlessly along.

Accident led him towards Hyde Park, which he reached at the hour when it is high change with fashion and the gay, and the glittering bask in the sunshine. He was amazed at the sight of so many noble and costly equipages, and still more amazed on learning the cause of their parade. He could not but admire the taste and splendour which was exhibited, but his admiration was seasoned with pity for the pride which prompted the display.

"Vanity of vanities:" said he ; "ye strive which shall excel in show, and forget too oft the poor of the world, which drags after ye its heavy chain of poverty, and the griefs which cling to it. Self—self—is your motto ! From your high throne ye look no down upon the lowly—they are not of ye, and ye will not of them—their sight would offend ye ! Oh !

shame that it should be thus ! How many hearths could ye gladden with your presence ? How many mouths fill and drooping spirits cheer with the cost of but one little display ? Up, then, and be doing ! Drone not a worthy life uselessly away. Listen ! Your brother in mortality cries aloud for bread, and ye hear him not !—your sister is in rags and ye do not see her ! Think ye so much was given without a duty to perform in return ? Answer ! Will ye account for it to His satisfaction when He demands it of ye ? Remember while it is yet time, for the harvest cometh, when, with the poorest mortality, ye shall be reaped together and gathered before His presence to await His eternal judgment !”

A scream broke in upon his thoughts !—a loud scream of agony and fear, that dispelled like a breath the gloomy thoughts which possessed him, and awoke him at once to a sense of duty. Looking to the place from whence the sound came, he saw a female lying in the carriage-way, having that instant been run over whilst attempting to cross the road ; he hastened to her assistance, and dragging her to the footpath, was immediately surrounded by a crowd of curious and inquiring loiterers. But oh ! what were

his thoughts—who can paint his sorrow and surprise at that moment, when looking into her face he recognized a young countrywoman, the daughter of a poor neighbour in the Highlands, who, it was said, had been tempted to leave her home by one who had betrayed her, and had now abandoned her, a miserable wretch, amidst the outcasts of London. It was her betrayer himself who had caused her accident! She sought him in her abandonment, amongst the ranks of fashion and of beauty, and seeing him approach had ventured to meet him, that he might not forget the claims she had on him, and thinking to draw his attention more fully towards her, had dared to cross before him, when he whipped his horses in order to pass more suddenly by her,—which, causing them to plunge forward at the very moment she was before them, had trampled her beneath their feet.

Yes: the fair Flower which lends its fragrance and its beauty to the garden in which it grows, Pleasure plucks with its unhallowed hand, and wearing it a moment in its bosom, casts it thoughtlessly away, defiled amidst the weeds of life, leaving not a scent behind!

Carefully and tenderly Rob led her away, and blushed not to take her hand as she leant upon him for support, in acknowledgement of their past acquaintance.

“ Poor lassie,” said he, “ I will see you to my own home, and my mother shall tend you—to the leprous house he led you, you shall go no more ; and what tho’ we be poor ? will not He who sent the ravens to feed the blessed Elijah look down upon us with pity, and bless our humble abode ? Nay, nay, weep not so ; all will be well. You shall go back to your bonny home in the Highlands, and be a comfort yet and a help to the auld folk, will you not ! ”

A sob was all her answer. Gazing mournfully upon the ground, she suffered him without a word to lead her to his home—he comforting and cheering her with kindly words as they went along.

When they had reached the humble apartments where Rob had lodgings, and which he called his home, he bade her look cheerly, and keep her heart up, for they would be kind to her, and his mother he was sure would be happy to see she had a spirit yet which had still sufficient strength to dare to do right.

Opening the door gently, he looked in, and found

his mother, who was not in the best of health, sitting by the fireside ; she was knitting, and as he led Mary towards her, she looked enquiringly at him—for the poor girl, with her head bowed with grief, and her face hid in her hands, was not easily to be recognised.

“ You remember Mary Graham, mother ? ”

A look of pity, and a start, was all her answer.

“ The rascal who enticed her away hither, with smooth words and kind promises, has abandoned her, and cast her loose on the wide world to starve or die, for him ! I met her thus, a poor outcast ; and have brought her, mother, here, that we may reclaim her to her own home again, that she may be a comfort yet to her sorrowing parents—for I could not let her go back again unto the polluted house he had taken her to.”

“ Heaven forbid ! ” answered Mrs. Heatherden.

“ The child shall be welcome to our best, Rob, an' she be content to share her lot wi' ours. Puir thing ! it is a dool heart to take on so, but we maun cheer her ! ”

And rising from her seat, she took the poor girl by the hand, and bade her take heart ; but the kindness offered only increased her grief, and caused her

to fall on her knees, sobbing hysterically and in broken accents her gratitude for their kindness.

"Na, na,—ye are welcome, Mary," answered Mrs. Heatherden ; " be patient and cheer ye : all will be well ! "

" Oh ye are too guid to me ! " cried Mary. " It is that which overcomes me now,—to think that ye will offer shelter to a poor polluted wretch like mysel', and I can never thank ye sufficient for it ; but "—and her sobbings increased—" when I shall have somewhat atoned for my past life, and asked forgiveness of God for—for—that I am guilty of, I will pray for you that HE may bless you ! I cannot thank ye now, my heart is no fit—indeed it's no ! "

" We do not blame ye, Mary," said Rob, " but the wretch who has been your ruin. Could he not find aught to sport with but the innocent and simple ? Would nothing but the defiling a poor heart please him ? For the gratification of a moment must he create a life of pain—mayhap an eternity of woe ? Oh, I would not have the canker at my heart—no, not for a kingdom ! But heed it not now, lass, let the past away and take your hope from the future : we will protect you ! "

With this Rob left home,—partly for an excuse to leave Mary and his mother alone, for he had great faith in his mother that she would be able to comfort Mary more, if he was absent than if he was present; and partly because he thought Mary would unburden her thoughts more, and be happier for it, if he was not there: so it was with no small degree of satisfaction that he bethought himself they wanted several little necessary articles, before it got late and the shops closed.

Rob had now only a few pounds left of the store which he had brought with him from Scotland, but still he did not despair of the future. He had made applications at some of the large publishers and newspaper offices for employment, and he had great hopes of an engagement. He had also published a small volume of poems before he left home, which he had left in a bookseller's hands for sale, and hoped a benefit from them; in addition to which he had another volume ready for publication, and he had little doubt in his mind of being able to get something for its copyright,—so that he did not consider he had any cause of immediate alarm. The spirit of Hope, the good genius of the sanguine, ever bore

him upon its wings,—and as it soared above the realities of life, he could see in the far distance that land of promise, the shores of which shone brightly afar off, and gave a reality to the future. There was, however, one cause of sorrow, whose contemplation was ever painful to him, and not without apprehension,—that was, the increasing illness of his mother, who had never enjoyed good health since she came to town. The change from the country had been too great for her; the sickly confinement in miserable London lodgings did not agree with her. She longed again for the fresh breeze of the mountain and the sweet-smelling heather; and an occasional walk in the suburbs was no recompense for their loss. Not that she complained—she loved her son too fondly to make him sad by her complaints; though Rob would often tax her with not being well, but she would smile at him at such times and say how much worse she would be to be absent from him. There was no doubt, however, but anxiety for the future had much to do with her ailing; and it was to this cause alone Rob often attributed it, and he expected at no distant time he should be able to remove from her all trouble on this head,—and then would they not be happy!

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When he again got home, he found her in bed, and Mary sitting by her side, watching her and tending her wants with all the zeal and earnestness of a true gratefulness for the kindness she had received, which pleased Rob, and doubly repaid him for anything he had done, for he thought what must he have done; he could not have tended her, and a stranger would have had no heart in it—for, Heaven knows, in the mechanical duties of a nurse there is no consolation, but the contrary.

He was sad to see her, and his heart smote him as he thought he had not asked her how she was before,—for the excitement of having found Mary had made him forget to do so, or to notice the change which had taken place since he had left in the morning.

“Mother! forgive me!” he said as he bent down and kissed her pale cheek—“I did not think you were so ill.”

“I dinna blame ye, Rob,” was her reply; “but tell me, did ye see his lordship?”

“Whist mother! she will hear you,” said he, pointing to Mary, who was busied preparing their evening meal—“and I would not let her know, just

now, what are our expectations or present means ; sufficient for her when her own sorrow settles, that she should be disturbed with others—not that I fear but all will be well.”

“ Puir thing ! she has a sair fortune,” said Mrs. Heatherden ; “ not all the wealth o’ the world can gie her back that peace she has lost, but wi’ drooping head she’ll e’er gang mair—a blush to the friends who own her.”

“ God help her ! ”

“ Amen, my son—’tis a good wish and her only trust. But tell me, how fared your errand ? Did you see him, Rob ? ”

“ Nay, mother.”

“ How so ? ”

“ He was engaged, and could not be disturbed. I must call again to-morrow,” said he, anxious to put the best construction on his reception.

She was silent. Sinking back upon her pillow she closed her eyes, as if to shut from her view something which rose in imagination before her, and troubled her like the presentiment of a coming evil ; for though she fully believed in the genius of her son, she had not the same strong faith in his means

of battling with the future, to buoy her up, or cheer her in the prospect of better times. She hoped that it might be so ; and when Rob would talk with her about it and indulge his fancy in anticipations of honours and wealth, she would only shake her head and look more fondly and sadly upon him—she could never be brought to realise it.

Fearful of fatiguing her with too much conversation, and hoping she would be able to get a little repose, Rob left her and joined Mary, who had now nearly finished her preparations for tea. He helped her in placing the necessary things upon the table, and spoke gaily to her, that he might lead her thoughts into a happier channel, and make her forget the changes of life she had entered into ;—but she said little, only on the subject of her thankfulness, which Rob would not listen to,—and her fears that she would be a burden to them, which he immediately answered—

“ The deed itself, Mary, has more than repaid me. My poor mother is sick, and cannot do about as she would, and you have come to help her ; and you will be a second child to her, to wait upon her and watch her ailings, and tend her like a daughter. I could

not do it, and you can. And was there no satisfaction in doing a good act—this help will repay it ; so say no more about it, Mary."

The tea was prepared ; and, as Mrs. Heatherden was not asleep, the table was taken to the side of the bed, and Rob and Mary drew each a chair and sat by it,—and first joining together in thanks to God for his mercy in giving their "daily bread," they made a happy meal together.

Yes, they were happy—momentarily it might be, yet they were happy. Rob was happy that he had done a good act, and had had it in his power to offer a shelter to one who was actually destitute—but more happy that he could wave one sorrow from the breast of care, and call a smile over the face of misery. Mrs. Heatherden was happy to see her son in spirit and health, for a mother's love is a child's glory ; and Mary was happy that she had retraced her steps from the paths of sin to the ways of virtue, and that is joy to the soul. And what though they were poor and poverty was their guest ? Want, as yet, had but peered through the broken window panes, or stalked by the crazy door ; it had not yet entered their dwelling,—and the Angel of good

deeds held its spectre image in abeyance that night, shedding her light of peace within, and filling their bosoms with gladness !

CHAPTER VI.

BEING A TRYING ONE.

ROB was up early in the morning, and found Mary, who had slept little, already busy about their room. His mother slumbered fitfully and uneasily, and



Mary said she had had a "sair night," but hoped

she might be better. He gently kissed her as she slept, and taking the manuscripts with him which he intended offering the publishers, noiselessly opened the door and hastened into the street. It was, however, too early for this purpose by some hours; but he wished to commune with himself first, and mark more boldly his plans for the future. As yet he had scarcely any rule of governance: a desire and a hope of its fulfilment—a vague thirst for a something—a wish for he scarce knew what—a vision of fame and wealth—but indistinct and undefined as a dream.

The dim grey of morning's earliest light hung upon the houses. The streets, save here and there a workman going early to his occupation, utterly deserted, made even that centre of the great city look (in its contrast to its usual busy appearance) more like some country market town than the leviathan it was. All was quiet and hushed, like the stillness of a volcano before it bursts into being; and the little sparrows chirped from the roofs, or flew about in the certainty of security and freedom from molestation, and were by far the noisiest inhabitants of the streets.

One by one, however, shuffled into the scene to play his daily part. Blinds were drawn up, doors were opened, and shutters flew back, and drowsy maids, with mop and pail, were soon busily engaged in washing away from the steps of doorways the accumulated dirt of the previous day. Anon, a heavy rolling noise of a distant cart, rumbling afar off, and dying away again,—then another nearer, and another nearer still; then a cab, loadened with luggage, with one solitary muffled figure within, in haste to catch the early coach; then more carts, and shortly the early coach itself, with more cabs and more coaches. A shop opened here, another there;—and, in a little while, the sleeping City may be said to be fully awoke into life, action, and reality.

After a long walk in the country, Rob resolved that he would seek some employment first, and afterwards try and sell his manuscript poems to some publisher; for he came to the conclusion that it was useless to think of getting them done by subscription, seeing he knew no one, and had no one to introduce him, for he half closed the door against any hopes he had on the part of lord Highflown, though he had said so much, and promised to assist

him in so important a matter if ever he should come to town,—still, he did not totally relinquish his expectations in this quarter ; he would, at all events, see the issue of his application made the day previous ; it might be his lordship's anxiety was real—he had once believed it so, and he had no positive reason now to doubt to the contrary.

After partaking of some refreshment at a small country inn, he thought it advisable to return and renew his enquiries for employment. He first called at those places where he had previously made applications at, and various were the answers he got ; at one, he was directed to call again ; at another, they had no opening ; and so on with some excuse or other at all. He tried a few fresh places with the like success,—and, totally dispirited in this first prosecution of his plan, he relinquished for the present, or at all events for the day, the idea of getting employment, and resolved in the next place to try his poems with the publishers. He fixed in his mind whom he would have, and enquiring his way, was lucky in finding the principal within. After waiting for some time, at liberty to see him, Rob followed the clerk as he led the way to his master's private office, with a

beating heart, which was not at all decreased by finding a stern, iron-looking man, ready to receive him, who, in a very decisive tone, asked him at once his business. Rob told him, and proffered his manuscript; which the publisher took and carelessly turned over a few leaves, without, however, giving any proper attention to their contents."

"What is your name, sir?" asked the man of letters.

Rob told him, and his birth-place, also.

"Have you ever published before?" continued his interrogator.

"I have, sir," answered Rob; "a small volume at Glasgow, about three months ago."

"What is it, and who is the publisher?"

Rob again answered him, but as he had never heard of the book, and the publisher of it was of a very secondary character,—he told him at once that he thought he could do nothing for him; and ringing a bell, Rob was shown out by the same clerk who introduced him.

Here was another disappointment, to him more serious than the first—and he felt it bitterly. But he was not to be cast down by one refusal; there

were other names ranked as high as the house who had slighted his pretensions—he would try them. Strange were the receptions he met with. One had no opening for poetry ; another could not enter into the subject without a letter of introduction ; some shrugged their shoulders, and said poetry was a drug in the market ; others could not be bothered with poetry—they had something better to do ; and the last person he called upon, after glancing over one or two of the pieces, with a “ hum ” and a “ hah,” which made Rob’s blood boil with vexation, advised him to go home, and trouble his head no more about poetry—he could see plainly that was not his *forte*, and he was but loosing time by following it.

Poor fellow ! it was a bitter taunting lesson he learned that morning ! Was it not enough to feel the last plank slide from under his feet, without the cold indifference attending it ? His very heart’s sanctuary was rifled of the fairest flower which it had cherished so tenderly ! The sweet breath of Hope had faded, just as he felt his sails filling to the breeze, which was to waft him to the shores of an undying fame, and he was left becalmed in an ocean of doubt and uncertainty ! What must he do ? He

could not return again a labourer to the fields—he was almost blighted and powerless of effort ; but he felt that he did not deserve the treatment he had received ; and oh ! the misery of that moment when we feel the first cold breath of Neglect—it mildews all within !

Yet the world cannot see this ! We sit down to a banquet and acknowledge the richness of the feast,—yet care not for the cost which produced it, or the labour which brought it forth. We gloat over the tempting viands, and gluttonize to our fill,—self, self, our only feeling ; and the poor spirit which waked the enchantment into being, pines in want and misery—still creating, yet neglected, unpitied, and unknown !

Such were our hero's feelings ; but when he remembered the glorious names of Johnson, Chatterton, Otway, Burns, Dryden, Butler, and a host of others, who had suffered and undergone more than him—his heart swelled with the pride of an enthusiast, and he almost gloried in the wrongs which linked his name with theirs. His, then, was no exception in the race of Fame. Otway died of hunger ; Chatterton, stung by neglect and driven

by necessity, cut short a glorious future by poison. Did not want kill Burns? and was not Butler wrestling with starvation, at the very time his king and the whole court were enchanted with the wit of his productions? And should he repine—should he shrink from such an ordeal? He, a young novice, who had not yet won his spurs, and whose glory it was to rank with them? Alas, he cared not for himself; others had dependence on him, and he must surmount for their sakes every difficulty which beset him.

The first thorn in Life's path wounds sorely, but Hope pours its oil into the wound, and makes us forget the pain which we suffer in a happier anticipation of the future! It was its sweet spirit which encouraged him now in his desolation. It upraised the soul which had almost sunk in despair, and gave breath to the mighty thoughts which were ever springing in his bosom. It gave him resolve and strength to grapple again with the trials which met him; and he girded himself for the struggle, strong in the consciousness of his own power.

With this feeling new awakened within him—strong in the future, defying the present—he bent

his steps once more to lord Highflown's; but he little thought another trial, keener yet, awaited him there, and was destined—though for a moment only it might be—to crush this new spirit within him, almost to its utter annihilation.

When he arrived at his lordship's house, a slight doubt whispered within him, and as he again lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall with a noise which made his heart tremble, he mistrusted himself. But when the same footman again answered the door, he endeavoured to call up a ghostly smile, for he felt unable to express himself without showing his agitation,—but he was saved the trouble, for as the man recognised him, he said, in rather an impertinent familiar way—

“ Oh, it's you, is it?—walk in.”

It was not genuine will that which conveyed Rob into the house. No; it was a mechanism without a wish of its own; pure clock-work—a kind of destiny clock-work, which sometimes moves us whether we will or no! And when he was there, and found himself alone in the hall, for the man had left him as soon as he entered, he felt a surprise at his situation, and almost wondered how it had been accomplished.

He was not, however, left long to himself; the lacquey returned in a few moments, and placing a note in his hand fresh from the pen which had written it, opened the door and very significantly pointed the way out.

In a state of bewilderment, Rob looked first at the man, then at the door, and last at the note; and as if seeking an explanation to the scene which was being enacted, tore it open and read it over. For a moment he was stupified. "His lordship enclosed a sovereign, and begged he might not be intruded upon again; he had no time to attend to such things." The scene was at its climax. Rob tore the note into a thousand pieces, and cast them from him, and dashing the money to the ground—his eyes sparkling with rage and his lips white with passion, he screamed rather than spoke—

"Does he take me for a beggar that he sends his pittance to me? Was it for this he made me leave my home? Did he entice me hither, with his promises of help and introduction, that he might insult me? Is this his patronage? God forgive him—God forgive him!"

The man stared at Rob, and thought he was going

mad, and the sooner he got rid of him the better ; so taking him by the arm he led him to the door, when giving him a slight push he closed it after him,—and picking up the sovereign, which he put in his pocket with an air of satisfaction, went whistling to his fellows.

Thus was Rob tossed by every humour. No sooner miserable, but full of hope again, and fancying himself strong in faith for the future : but the first puff of disappointment puts out the light of his faith—all his argosy is lost, and he is once again plunged in the darkness of despair !



in with rain and sleet, yet Rob went not home.

Poor fellow! he was too full of misery, and loved his home too well, or at least the loving spirits which dwelt there, too well to take to it a heart surcharged with hate, and overflowing with all the baser passions of his nature. The good resolutions, with which he had built himself up in the morning, had all fled, or been swallowed up in the rage which possessed him; and now curses choked him as they came struggling and fighting up his parched throat for utterance,—and his dry eyes, denied the blessing of a tear, stared wildly and distractedly around. Hungered and athirst, yet heedless; cold and wet, and wretched in both body and soul, opposing himself to the bitter blasts—he staggered along rather than walked, splashing through the flooded streets, he knew not and he cared not whither, so that (as he thought) he fled from the selfishness and the ingratitude of man! The night in its desolation harmonized with his feelings. There was misery within, and it was misery without. Sad in heart and full of bitterness, despair whispered darkly—and the wind and the rain echoed it: its demons filled the air, and rode on the angry blast—fell in the rain drops, or shivered in the cold wind—prompting and

goaded the miserable, and ever tempting them to evil. Confused in mind, his breast a chaos of wild passions,—he fully resigned himself to chance, for Hope (the bright flower of his existence) had cast its blossoms on the waves, and was for the time destitute of promise. He felt like the blasted trunk of a once goodly tree, which had been stripped by the envious lightning of its beauty, yet spared some life within—a future without a joy, and its brightness nothing now but decay and desolation.

Occasionally and for a moment he would think of home, and the kind smiles which awaited him there; but he could not, as he thought he should if he returned, cast a cloud over those smiles or change the sunshine of this joy into weeping and despair. His desire had been to see his mother happy, and raised above the world by his means. He had often pictured to her the honours of genius and the wealth which it would command. He had mixed for her a cup filled with promises of future happiness; and must he so soon dash it from her lips?—must he, who had tried so hard to implant this sweet belief in her breast, be the one to tell her it was not true? Alas, it seemed so; and his heart was filled with

pain when he thought of it. How he wished, a thousand times over, that he had followed for her sake some honest labour, that should at least have earned for them their "daily bread,"—that he had toiled, as others toiled, in the fields where he had been brought up, and worked even by the sweat of his brow ; for their subsistence, then, he thought, they might have been happy—their cares would have been few and their joys permanent—no anxiety for the future to torment them with its mocking anticipations of delight or sadness, but all peace and soberness of thought—to day as yesterday, to-morrow as to day—and so, happy in their state of quietude, they might have journeyed on through the path of life, satisfied, and full of gladness ! Yea, he thought he might then have been married, and Lucy his wife ; and who knew the joys that would have been in store for him ? Could future honours recompense him for the troubles he had undergone, and the sufferings he had endured ? Would greatness repay him for all his sacrifices ? " Fool, fool," he said in his anguish—" I have been following a vain shadow, which has mocked me in my vanity ! "

Still he had tasted some little of the sweets of

ambition. In his own country he was known, and his writings were partly appreciated. His songs had been, in a few instances, set to music, and his country people sung them, and they were "household words" to them, and often had been their solace. Rob had felt great joy in it, for in all his writings he had endeavoured to inculcate some mighty truth of love or duty; they were not mere rhymes to please by their jingle—the rhyme was but the setting, the thought was the gem which adorned it. And this Fame, Rob felt, was silently spreading, and would in the end (should he live to see it) be his reward. What if he was yet unknown in the great city? truth must prevail, and his name would yet be trumpeted there. Should he, then, altogether repine? Could he think to achieve, at one grasp, the sceptre which should give him honour in this world and make him reign in the hearts and minds of men for ever? Alas, no! He had over-reached himself, and must fall back on life,—and this it was which was his grief. He had been flattered by one who promised to be his patron and lead him to power: this was the gilded bait which first tempted him to London; he thought he had but to come, and

honours would shower upon him—for so he had been tutored, and his simple soul fed upon the honied words of flattery which had buoyed him up with expectations, the harvest of which had been so contrary. And hence the violence of his despair. A child of impulse, he was full of strong passions, and easily excited,—and these rebuffs, coming so one upon another, almost drove him besides himself. Without friends, his money almost gone, and no immediate means of procuring more; want and starvation before him, and a dear mother dependent upon him; his last hope, his patron, failed him, and no one to appeal to,—what must he do? He felt his self-love crushed and his spirit insulted: mocked by the publishers, spurned by his patron,—what must he do? “Work—work—work!” said the Fiend.

The clocks from the various churches chimed, and gave the hours, again and again—but he heeded them not: they brought no balm upon their wings which could assuage his pain,—there was no promise of future in their sounds which gave him comfort. It was man's ingratitude from which he fled; and, like Timon, he sought an asylum far from his

haunts. In this mood he wandered, careless of "the pelting of the pitiless storm."

How often, in the severest trials of our nature, in the darkest struggles of despair, when the waters of misery have risen above our lips, and we pant and choke with fear,—do we not feel some friendly plank thrust beneath our feet by the almighty power of an invisible hand, and we float securely above the troubled stream. Nay, when the heart sickens at life, and our very existence has become a loathing—do we not find some little cord, mighty in its strength, that still endears us to its servitude. That it should be thus is one of the all-wise ordinations of Providence. HE suffers the sword to be drawn, and suspended above our heads,—but HE yet knows the hair by which it hangs is sufficient; whilst to mortality it teaches HIS endurance, and prepares it by HIS chastenings fitter for that world to which we are all so rapidly journeying, and a life of blissful immortality!

Cold, wet, and dispirited—unsettled in purpose—not knowing what to do, Rob leaned for support beneath the windows of a large house, which looked out upon the highway. A blaze of light shone

through the crimson curtains, telling of comfort and luxury within, and mutely recommending all wanderers from their homes to return and be happy ; to such as acknowledged it, it spake eloquently, and made them more eager in their return ; whilst to those who had almost turned their backs on home, who had fled from it, as our hero had done, it appealed in a voice of love and duty—and seldom appealed in vain.

Rob saw it, and acknowledged its meaning with a sigh. Home ! Yes, there is a sweetness in thy name, however lowly is thy dwelling ; thou art a joy to the joyful, and a balm to the sorrowful ; peace reigns in thy breast, and happiness in thy right hand ; thy heart is filled with love, and thy face ever smiles a welcome upon us who would forget thee ! And as he stood there, thinking of it, the sounds of a harp struck his ear, and after a brief prelude, a voice, rich in melody, joined the accompaniment in song—when, judge his surprise, the words were his own ! It was a simple ballad of his country, speaking of home and its delights ; and now, like a holy messenger of peace, it knocked at its creator's breast, and woke his heart from the dreams of

despair in which it slumbered ; tears sprung into his eyes, and he sobbed like a child ; the base passions which had possessed him were banished in a moment,—and self-accused and humbled at his own weakness, but with a spirit yet strengthened in its trust in God, he turned his steps once more to that home, which a few moments ago he had contemplated leaving for ever.

“ My poor mother,” said he, “ would I leave thee in such a moment as this, when sickness rests on thy pillow, and my help is thy whole comfort ! God forgive me ! what a world is this, that thus drives its children from its bosom ! Oh, were it not for those ties which he has planted within us, we should indeed be desolate ! ”

“ Let me henceforth,” he continued, “ trust in myself, and be merit my only patron, to speak for me to the world : for what are such puppets I would have trusted to ? mere images to stand upon the mantelpiece—tall statues upon pedestals, which look well in the hall or library, but serve no other end—drones with the name of bees, that lick the honey from the industrious insect, and take great credit for their condescension, and the

acknowledgement which is profitable only to themselves."

Rob arrived at home, but sorrow was yet before him. His mother's illness had very alarmingly increased, and he found her altogether unconscious of his presence. It was fever—the burning skin, and restless wandering thoughts, told him too plainly ; and without more ado he went in search of a medical attendant.

After a little difficulty, and one or two disappointments, he found one almost by chance. An elderly gentleman was entering a house, to which he had been directed, and on which was a large brass plate, with " Smith, Surgeon," engraved thereon. Rob immediately accosted him.

" Are you a doctor, sir ? "

" Yes, my man ; what's the matter ? " answered the gentleman, who was the master of the house.

" Oh, Sir, my mother's very ill—a fever, sir. Do come, or she will die ! "

" Come in first, and tell me all about it," replied Mr. Smith, " and then I'll go with you ; it may be necessary that I should take something with me which would be of service to her."

“ Rob told him how she was, and after the surgeon had made up a draught, they set off together.

Mr. Smith was a tall fresh-looking gentleman about sixty ; his hair was white, and he was rather inclined to be bald ; he was rather spare, had dark eyes and good features ; and was dressed entirely in black, excepting a white neckerchief, which he always wore, as being professional.

He found Mrs. Heatherden worse than he expected, and after administering the draught and waiting some little time to see the effect, he wrote a prescription, and promised to call again in the morning.

It was many weeks before she was so far recovered as to be able to sit up, during which time Rob had not been able to procure any employment, and his means were almost exhausted ; he had been at times, in fact, necessitated to solicit from the cold hand of charity, which he did through his flute ; and sometimes he would play for hours without earning more than a few pence, for he always choose the quietest streets,—and often as he would play some of his own country's ballads, the tears would trickle down his cheeks. Occasionally he would have a sixpence or a

shilling put into his hand, when he would immediately desist and purchase the required necessity.

One night—he had been playing for two or three hours without receiving anything—his money was entirely spent, and they had nothing in the house. His mother lay sleeping in the bed, and Mary sat by her side.

“What must we do, Mary?” asked he; “the doctor has ordered us to get her all we can to strengthen her, and I’ve not a shilling in the house.”

“She maun na pine now, Rob, and her so weak—she maun ha’ plenty.”

“But where, lassie, is it to come from?”

“There is a God watches us,” said she, unclasping a string of coral beads round her neck; “here, take ye this and get sillar on’t—for she maun no want, Rob.”

“No, no, Mary, keep it—it was your mother’s gift, and has been with you since childhood, for I mind it by the clasp, and I would not rob you of such a holy pledge of her love: before I take that, Mary, I will part with this!” holding up his flute.

“I ha’ seen this, Rob, for some time, and it’s made my heart sair,—and this morning (ye’ll forgie

me, Rob, for that I tell ye) I wrote to him—ye ken who I mean, Lord Highflown.”

“Who?” asked Rob, breathlessly.

“Lord Highflown.”

“The villain! Was it he who ruined you? Oh, but I see it all now! He came to my mother’s to patronize me, only as an excuse for meeting you and working your downfall—the black-hearted villain! Give me the letter!”

Tearing it into bits, and flinging them into the fire, he continued—

“Never, Mary! You shall never own his charity. It was he who tempted me hither,—and now, even as he has done with you, casts me off as a beggar. ‘Lord’ indeed! But I must away at once.”

As he turned to go, he met Mr. Smith in the doorway, who had heard all they had said; and now, kindly laying his hand on Rob’s arm, bade him be seated, and tell him all his circumstances.

“Though I am here as your medical man,” he said, “I have a higher duty to perform than merely a professional one: I am a man and a Christian, and love my fellow men; and where I can be of service it is as much my pleasure as my duty to be so. I over-

heard your discourse with Mary, and like her, I have long suspected you were sore pressed, and have often wished to talk with you about your affairs, but have daily put it off for a better opportunity—and now that opportunity has arrived, I shall not let it pass.”

Rob endeavoured to thank him for the interest he showed, but was gently interrupted by Mr. Smith, who continued—

“I feel exceedingly sorrowful that you should have been brought to this condition, though at the same time, I can make allowances for it. It was not entirely your fault, I acknowledge; but you should not have been so eager in listening to the advice of a stranger, especially where no interest could be served by it. You might as well have stayed at home and published, as have come to London to do so; and fame would as easily have reached you in Scotland as here, or perhaps sooner. However, the past is gone, and cannot be avoided,—we must let it go, and think of the present, how that can be amended. To show you that I have more than a common interest in you, here is your book which you published in Glasgow; and I can assure you it

is a great favourite of mine—for old as I am I am a sincere lover of good poetry.”

“ Oh sir, but you are very good ! ”

“ Have you tried for any situation since you came ? ”

“ I have, sir, but without success.”

“ Well,” continued Mr. Smith, “ it will be some time before your mother is fit to be removed. We must try again in the meantime, and should we not succeed, I would advise you then to return home ; you will, at all events, be happier amongst your friends than here. Here is some money for your present necessities, go and purchase what you want, whilst I and Mary attend to my patient. Not a word more : see, your mother is waking, and you have nothing for her. Go now.”

“ God bless you ! ” said Rob.

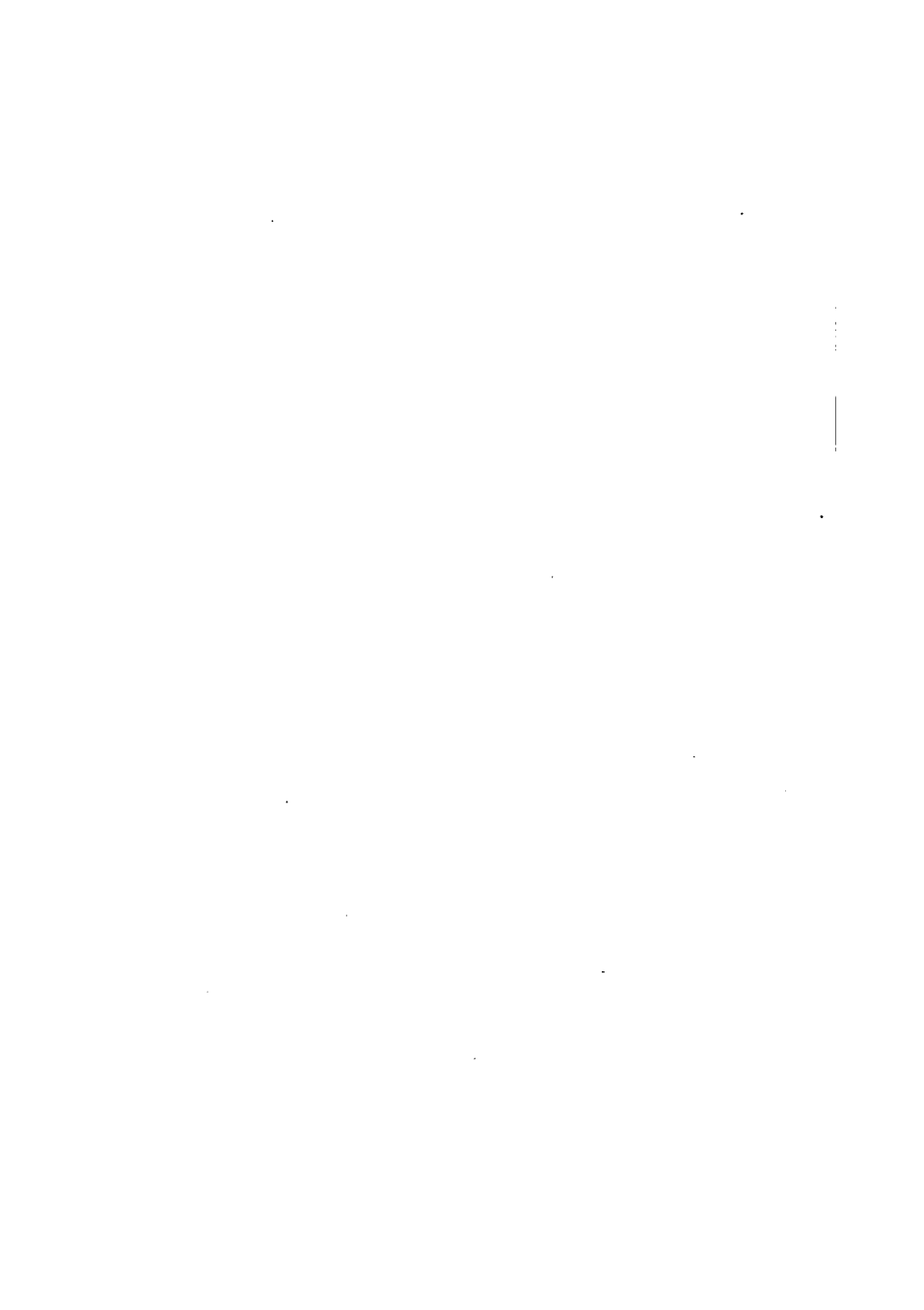
Mr. Smith interrupted more, and rose to visit Mrs. Heatherden.

Days and weeks passed on, long and tedious, during which Mrs. Heatherden slowly recovered. Rob no longer solicited charity from the crowd, for his benefactor had expressly forbidden it. He had, however, applied for a situation at various places,

and had at length got a temporary engagement of a week or two, with a slender remuneration,—but with this exception, was unable to meet with anything likely to be of service to him. It was, therefore, with a feeling of gladness that he acquiesced in Mr. Smith's suggestion to return home at once, and set about his preparations for departure with a good will, and a feeling of freshness, he had not felt for some time. It was arranged they should travel by short stages, on foot, resting as occasion might serve, at any of the villages they had to pass through. There was no railway then, and “it was much cheaper and far more pleasant to walk than to go by coach,” Rob said ; “and so long as they took their time over it it could not hurt them.” His kind friend consented, and when all was prepared, he spent the evening with them which preceded their departure, giving them at parting sufficient money to meet their expenses on the way.

Thus were the bright dreams of wealth and honour, which our hero had so earnestly expected to achieve, for the present swept away ; but their memory was still sweet in his bosom, and he could not forego the hope that at some future time, which

he trusted would not be long, he might reap the harvest he had sown. Now—life's cold reality was before him,—Work—work—work! not with head but with hands, was his only alternative. But bread and life were to be gained by it—sustained by it only. Necessity's stern and bitter law cannot be altered—will not be obliterated!



CHAPTER VIII.

BEING PROGRESSIVE.



T was a cold raw morning in the latter end of November, when Rob, with Mary and his mother, took their farewell of London. They rose early, and started as soon as it was light; and, though it was a weary way to journey on foot, they had made their choice to do so, and therefore could

not complain about it,—but cheerful and ready, they went away without a regret, and with a better prospect for the future. Like a pilgrimage to a holy shrine, they viewed their journey as one which would give them rest and comfort in their latter days: it was filled with bright promise, and joyful

were the anticipations at once more re-visiting their native country and home. What schemes of happiness did they not indulge in for the future ! What mighty resolves did not Rob make of improvement—that he would eschew poetry as a trade, and settle soberly to work to gain a livelihood for his mother and himself ; and then he would think of Lucy, and wonder if she was improved or altered in any way—and his heart would beat, and he would quicken his pace, involuntarily at such times, leaving Mary and his mother far behind, until he again remembered himself, when he would return a little way to meet them. Mary, however, felt sorrowful at the thought of meeting her parents, and at times she would doubt her reception, when she would be sad and silent for miles, and often tears would trickle down her face, and she would turn her head aside, that she might brush them away, or hide them from the sight of her companions. Still they journeyed on happily for some days, making short stages on account of Mrs. Heatherden, who bore the fatigue remarkably, and appeared gradually to gain in health and strength as they proceeded.

On the fifth day of their journey they stopped at a

village, where there were "wakes," or an annual festival being held, and a many loose characters and holiday people had assembled together, in order to promote its success. With these they could not avoid mixing, though Rob would have gone on, had his mother being able, to the next village, but as she was not, and it was late in the afternoon, they had nothing left but to make the best of it. So they went at once to search for lodgings, which they met with at an indifferent sort of public-house, where some show people were also staying: here they had to sit for some time in the common room, with persons of all sorts—from the gipsy pedlar to the gentleman's groom; and were often hustled in the crowd which thronged about in a manner anything but agreeable to them.

There was no way for them, however, but submission; and it was some relief when bed time came and they were shown to their sleeping rooms. Mrs. Heatherden and Mary had to sleep together in a room where were two other beds, each doubly occupied; and Rob had to put up with the like accommodation, sharing his bed with some person unknown.

In the morning when Rob awoke, which was not until late, for he had been unable to get to sleep for some hours after retiring, in consequence of the noise—he found himself alone in the room, and his partner and bedfellow, whoever he was, gone without his having seen him.

Mary and his brother were waiting for him, and had breakfast ready when he came down, after partaking of which they called for their reckoning, when Rob found his money was gone. He felt his pockets over minutely, and searched the room wherein he had slept without avail. The landlord was called, but could give no information. He had not seen it, and as to the parties who had slept in the same room with him he did not know them, they had been gone some hours, and he had never seen them before, all which was no consolation to Rob, who had nothing wherewith to pay his bill. It so happened, however, that Mrs. Heatherden had a little money on her, with which they redeemed themselves, and with heavier hearts and lighter pockets, for it was evidently no use lamenting their loss, as they had no clue to its recovery, they proceeded on their way.

Their next stopping place was a town, where, after

setting aside sufficient money to meet their expenses for the night, Rob laid out the remainder in a small assortment of books and trinkets, which he considered might be sold to yield them a good profit, and help them considerably on the journey. These he carefully made up into a pack, which he carried over his shoulder, and offered at the cottages and farm-houses on the road side. Occasionally, he would sell a trifling thing for a small profit, but more frequently when customers were scarce and his finances run short, he had to be satisfied with cost price, or even less than that. The books, however, were a drug upon his hands—they would not sell at any price, whilst the gewgaws of his pack were rapidly diminished to furnish them necessities for the road ; and when they were entirely finished, and he had nothing but his books left, he continued still to offer them wherever he went, in the hope of meeting with a customer, but without success—there were none wanting, and few could be even tempted to look at them, and when they did so, it was evidently more to examine the plates which they contained, than with a desire to purchase. They did not appear to understand them—they were by far too select, and much

unfitted for the contents of a pedlar's pack, which, it appeared, was more properly a pack for women and children. They had, however, one good effect; they often introduced them to the charity of those whom they met, and were the means of procuring an occasional meal, or lodgings in some of the outhouses of farms.

To add to their other misfortunes, the weather set in very badly—winter came suddenly upon them, with rain, and snow, and cutting icy winds, which made it extremely unpleasant to travel. This was a great drawback to their progress, especially as the weak state of health of Mrs. Heatherden was not proof against the combined attacks of a rough winter and a pinching poverty. Her health gradually gave way; again she caught a severe cold, which becoming worse and worse as they proceeded, at last incapacitated them from going further without rest. To procure this, Rob had again recourse to his old friend the flute—for his books, the proceeds of which had long since disappeared, he had been compelled to sacrifice for one-half their value to an old and second-hand bookseller, in one of the small towns through which they had passed, and frequently had he to leave Mary

and his mother, sheltered beneath a building or a haystack, whilst he had to face the storm and appeal through the touching melodies of his country for the bread which was to give them life. Sometimes he would offer short poems which he had had printed years ago, and which he had since treasured by him, for sale, at any of the respectable houses he visited, which would occasionally, but very seldom, bring a trifle to their assistance. More frequently, however, he had to speak out with the voice of a mendicant, and solicit from the too often deaf ear of charity, which would not be appealed to in any more silent yet touching manner, for the support which was at such times grudgingly yet ostentatiously given.

There was a time when he would rather have died than humbled his spirit to every clod; but want oftentimes makes us acquainted with strange companions, for like the chameleon, which takes its hue from the leaves on which it feeds, so do we receive a bias in our manners from the society which we keep. As Rob had been obliged to shelter in the same hovel with beggars of every class—from those who made it a trade, to those who, like himself, were driven to it by the hard lot of necessity,—

so from these he had imbibed some of their boldness, and lost, in a great measure, that modesty which would have only in his present position been like a millstone about his neck.

The mechanic is recompensed for his skill, and the labourer for his toil,—for their work is ever before them, a visible one. The dreamer and the man of genius must await the fruition and accomplishment of theirs, for they are invisible, and posterity alone can award them their value. But oh, how different the reward! The one ephemeral, and the other eternal! The hand prospers, for it reaps that which the head has sown; and too often, alas, as in the case of the glorious Tasso, the bay which is destined for an immortal brow, is yet only woven into a chaplet which shall encircle the mocking skull of mortality, and the honours of life are heaped upon the dead, whilst the living continue to starve until Time shall have again pronounced his verdict in their favour. This is a sorrowful reflection, that our gifted ones should suffer so much misery. But how must it be remedied? Can it be avoided? Or, if not avoided altogether, can it not be alleviated?

The progress of knowledge seems to be its best

help,—for with its spread we acknowledge a ready hand to assist it, and daily see and hear less of its sufferings. It can be no state remedy, though the state might do more: the antidote will be found in the advancement of learning, which shall teach us to love and honour its apostles. But to our story.

One evening it was getting dark, and they had travelled many weary miles without tasting food. Mrs. Heatherden, who was very weak, was supported betwixt Rob and Mary; yet they had no lodgings to go to, nor money wherewith to purchase bread. The wind blew keenly, and the rain and snow fell cold and wetting, and they were thoroughly drenched, when Mrs. Heatherden begged to be put down on the hedge side to rest, for she was unable to go further. They found for her as good a shelter as they could beneath some trees, whilst Rob hurried off in search for help and a resting place for the night. He discovered a farm house at a little distance, but the servant in charge said her master was away, and she could not allow them to shelter there; she, however, gave him some broken meat, and directed him to a farm a little further on, where she thought he might be able to succeed. He hastened

back to his parent, and cheered her with the news, and giving her a little of the food, bore her with the assistance of Mary to the house they were directed to. They got permission to shelter in the barn; and the inmates, seeing their distressed condition, allowed them to come into the kitchen, and warm themselves by the fire, and not content with this made them some hot gruel, which cheered their spirits and revived their exhausted frames,—after which they retired to the barn, where, on plenty of clean straw, they found a comfortable shelter from the winter storm.

Thus they travelled for many a weary day through wind and rain and snow—exposed to the merciless peltings of the weather—with little food, and that often the cold and cutting gift of ostentatious charity, or the less dainty scraps from the tables of the poor, —with lodgings, whose title was but a shelter from the rough wind and drenching rain, and that generally to seek when day had faded and night had spread her darkness over all. Oh! it was a weary and heart-breaking pilgrimage; and it was only the happy prospect which they ever pictured as their reward, could cheer them on and bear their fainting

hearts to the new trials which daily—nay—almost hourly awaited them.

For often in the severest moments of their despair, when all was cloudy and dreary before them, and there was no ray to cheer with its coming light the darkness of the morrow—they would lift up their voices in prayer to God, that it might please Him to relieve them from their sufferings, and would think of death as a kind friend whose portals would open unto them a better future—they would snatch a joy of sweet anticipation from the contemplation of such a period; for oh, what was life to them that they should seek to live, but a toilsome journey whose ways were rough and flinty to their unshod feet—an existence whose thin cord was attenuated by the strain of every wrong—a gloom with no hope to cheer them as it passed—a cup of sorrows with no delight to sweeten the bitter draught—a heavy woe with no balm to soothe—for life's flowers had one by one withered at their feet, and its stem was left naked to the cold wind—there was no fragrance now in its breath to make the heart glad, for the thorns only were left upon its branches.

Time wore on, and Christmas with its festivities was near at hand, when they reached the neighbourhood of a large town in the north. The day had been bright and cheerful, though cold, and they had made a long journey in order to reach the town that night. They had to adopt the lodgings which necessity ever compelled them to when in towns, and in the low haunts of misery, where want and vice nestled together they found a resting place. Rob had, as he had oft times before, to go out with his flute and walk the streets, whilst he begged for a sufficiency for their present wants, and he did not wait as he had done at first, when he sought assistance from mendicancy, until the streets were half empty before he put his flute to his lips; no—he had lost that; his was now the front of one used to the trade, for necessity makes familiar the tricks and shifts of poverty, and puts a shameless countenance on her children.

That night Rob's mother died. She was seized with a fit,—and, for want of proper aid, expired. Then was the measure of his grief full—aye, to overflowing; and he found an echo to it in the festive scenes which were every where being enacted

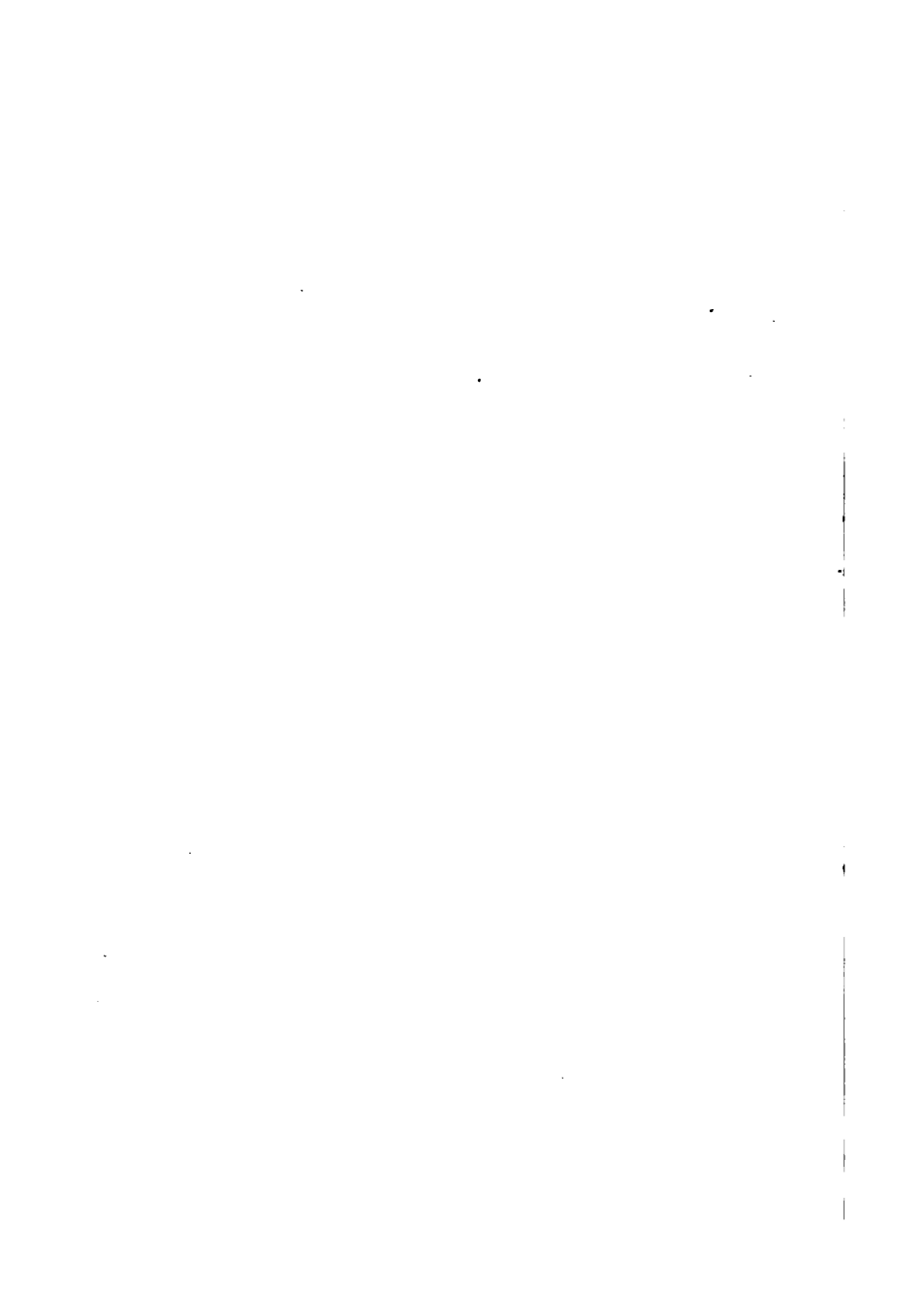
in honour of the season. She was buried at the expense of charity; and as the last sod covered her remains, he turned heart-sick away and left the town for ever. For some time he journeyed alone,—for Mary, seeing she could be of no further assistance to him, and must of necessity be only a burden, forbore, with the delicacy of her sex, any more looking to him for support, and had silently departed from him. But it is unnecessary to heap up the catalogue of his sorrows. Let us follow him once more,—then close the scene for ever.

It was the afternoon of the day before Christmas Day, when he again entered a town. All was bustle and preparation to do honour to the season. Wishes and welcomes hung on every lip; he heard them—they were not for him. Porters were busy running up and down with parcels and presents, but they were destined to go where want never entered; they were the formal compliments of the rich, and only went where plenty was before—they were not for him. The busy shops seemed bursting of customers, and their owners smiled and appeared glad as they saw the rival shops on the opposite side full also,—Rob had not tasted food that day. He took

his flute, his old and faithful friend, from his pocket, and with a heart almost broken with sorrow, began to play. The notes touched him with their plain-tiveness, as he had not been for many a day, and he felt the melody to which he gave birth. But it would not draw. A few children only heeded him, and they had nothing to give. He changed the tune to one more plaintive still—but it only drove the children away—he was no better: a merry one—no, it would not do; and he was finally obliged to give it up in despair.

Day was closing fast; and the bright stars, one by one, came forth and looked down, like so many eyes of Heaven, upon the doings of earth, as if they were put there to watch and record its deeds in the dark night. Lights appeared also in all the windows, and a little later still music might be heard and the shuffling of feet,—for Pleasure was holding her court, and happiness was at a premium! But hold! be silent ye musicians—ye dancers be still! Hark! there are sobs of sorrow beneath your window: misery and want are without, and despair has fixed its deadly pangs in the heart of a noble one. See! he hurries on—what means that haste? He has

reached the river's brink: now he has taken something from his breast which he breaks in twain, and casts into the stream—it is a flute! Oh God—hark! see! he has plunged into the flood, and the boiling waters bubble above his head,—but the music is high and the dancers hear not. Play on, it is over now!



CHAPTER IX.

BEING A CONCLUSION.

ONE, two, three,
four, five, six, seven,
eight, — one, two,
three, four, five,
six, seven, eight!
—ding dong! ding
dong!



“What is that noise?” asked Rob, from his bed

of sickness. "What mean those bells? Why ring they so merrily?"

"It is Christmas time, my son—the day after Christmas Day. Cheer thee! Is it not a happy time?"

"Not for all: no—not for all!"

"How so, Rob?" enquired his mother, anxiously.

"Is it not true, then? Was it a Dream, mother—and are we still here?"

"Yea, my love. Cheer thee—what ails thee?"

"Oh mother, I have had an awful Dream! The path to Fame is thorny, and full of sorrow!"

"Thou hast been very ill, my son. I am glad to see thee better again."

"Ill! Mother, I've lived in that illness a life of misery! I thank my God it was but a dream, and I awake again to your dear presence! I thought you were dead, mother!"

"Alas, my son!"

"It was but a dream! But in that dream I learned that all hearts were not festive, even in this happy season—and the least happy were those who aspired to make others happier and better! I have been acquainted—in my sleep—with much misery and suffering, too great for human frailty to bear:

I have seen houseless wanderers without a shelter or a meal, dying inch by inch: I have seen those who aspired, like myself, to be teachers amongst men, fall from their high independence to the lowest mendicity—and forgetting the spirit which breathed within, truckle without a blush to all the meanness of beggar life: I have seen—but oh it rends my heart to say what I have seen—why should I live again the misery I have endured?”

“The fever is past, Rob—forget it.”

“Never! it has made me old in experience, and will make me better.”

“Thou art better. Cheer thee! Mr. Smith will be here soon again to see thee.”

“Mr. Smith!”

“Aye, the surgeon.”

“An elderly gentleman, mother, dressed in black, with a bald head and white hair?”

“The same!”

“A kind, benevolent gentleman, with a white neckerchief?”

“The same, child. Why so anxious?”

“Oh bless him—bless him! I thank God that he, of all, was not a dream!”

And he came—like as the Dream, kind and anxious as a parent: with him came Mr. Gladden, the publisher, who had read Rob's manuscripts and had come to purchase them, and offer Rob a situation in his own employ, which was alike honourable to both.

Here, then, was Christmas realized! Hope, once more, raised the sinking sufferer, with the certain prospect of a happy future, and joy once again filled his breast!

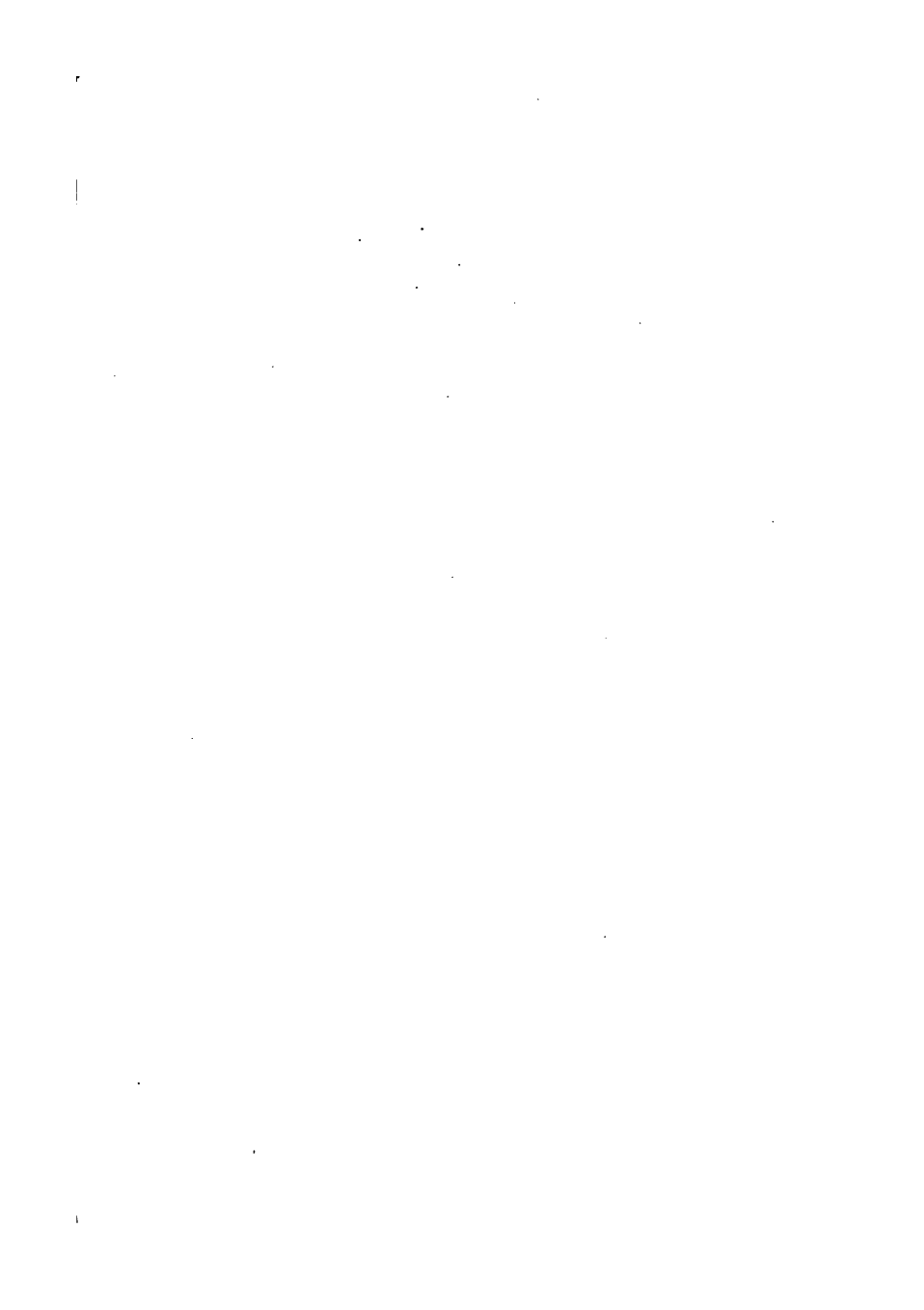
Slowly but surely he recovered, watched by a parent's love and the anxious care of his kind friends; and when Spring came, and the flowers blossomed in the open fields,—when the breath of Nature was kind, and the birds were glad with joy, — Rob was removed to a little cottage in the suburbs, where the trees waved their heads above him, and whispered thoughts of Poësy! Shall I proceed? Yes.

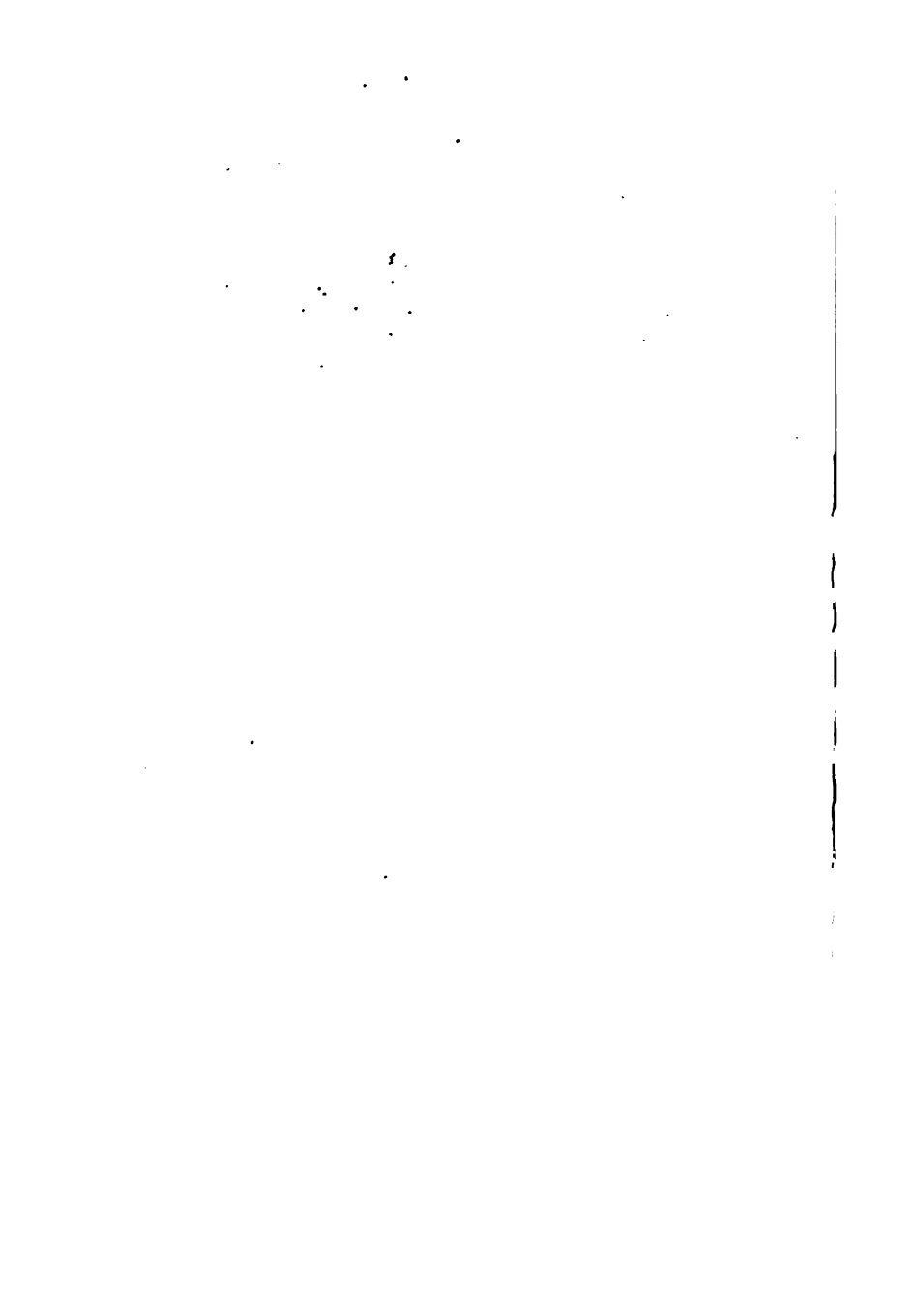
In that same summer, Rob (now famous in the world of literature) paid a visit to his Highland home, where he found Lucy all that could be wished—constant and beautiful as ever; and, after a little more whispering, willing to accom-

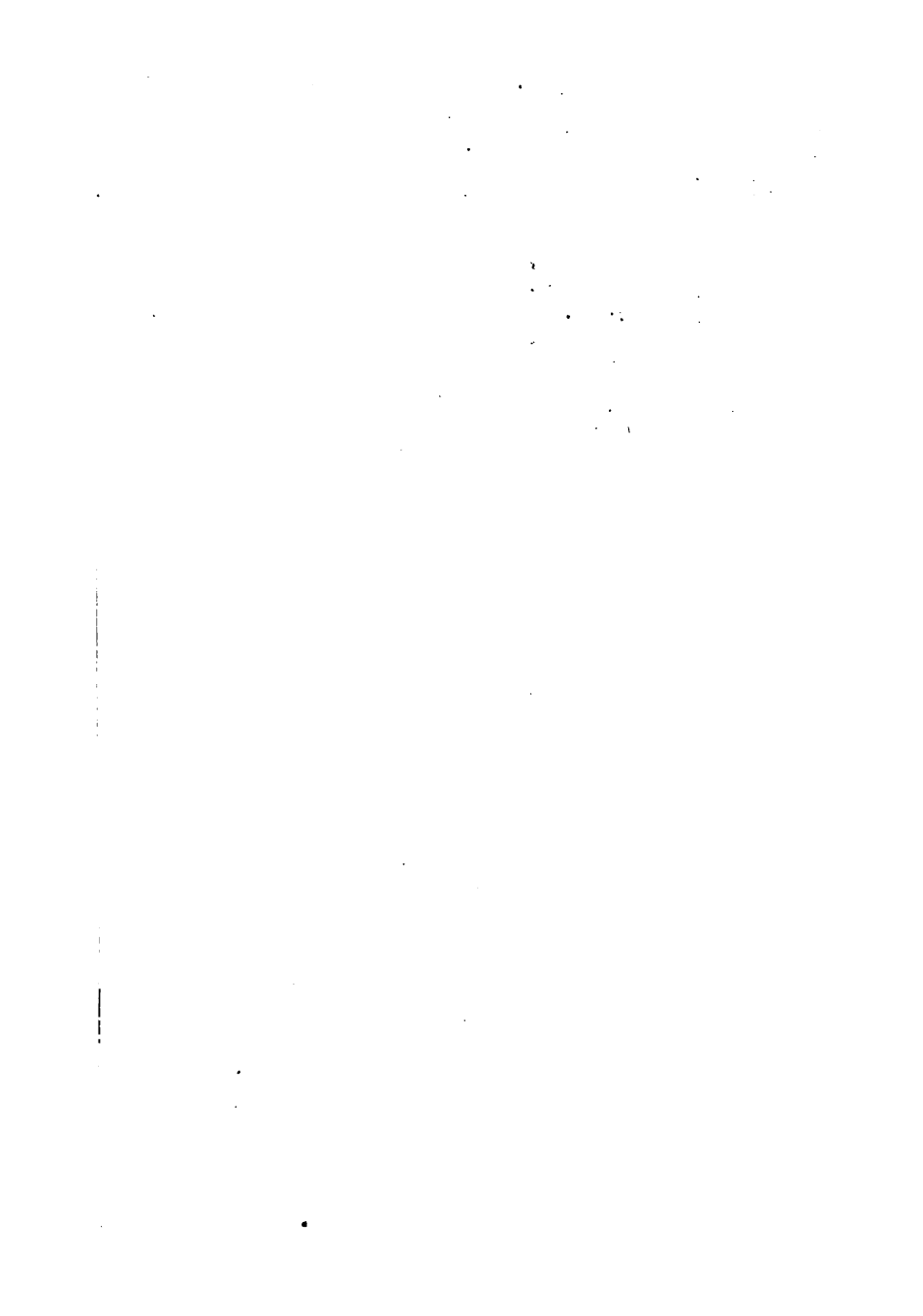
pany him, and be the sharer of his fortunes and his fame!

May God grant that our sorrows be but shadows, as this,—and that our hands and hearts be ever ready to make as real the joys of our poorer brethren! For such is CHRISTMAS!—such would its Founder have it be!









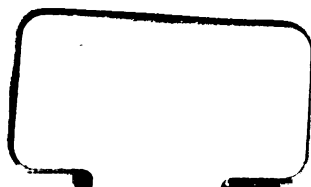


Table 1. Mean (SD) age, height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) of the 100 children in the study

Measure	Mean (SD)
Age (years)	10.4 (0.5)
Height (cm)	145.2 (10.1)
Weight (kg)	38.5 (10.2)
BMI (kg m ⁻²)	22.9 (3.5)

children were asked to perform a series of 10 trials of the task. The first trial was a practice trial and the remaining 9 trials were recorded. The mean of the last 9 trials was used for analysis. The children were then asked to perform the task again, but this time they were asked to perform the task as fast as they could.

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